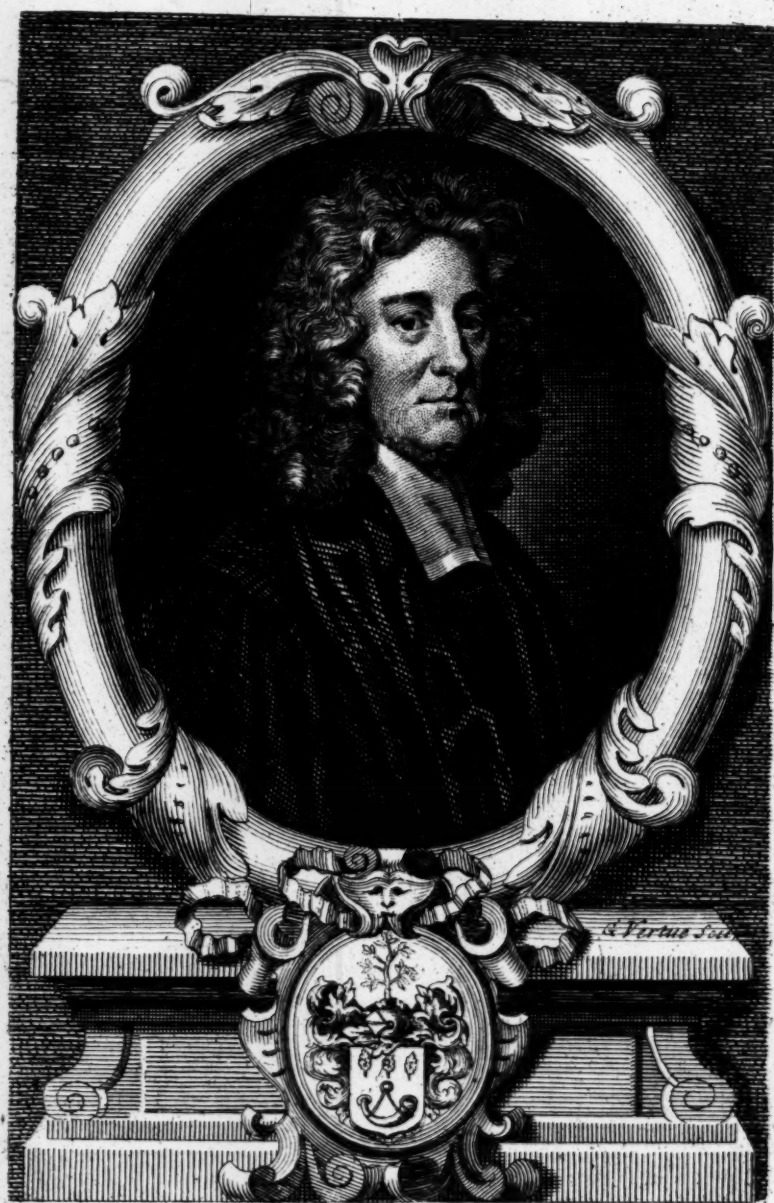
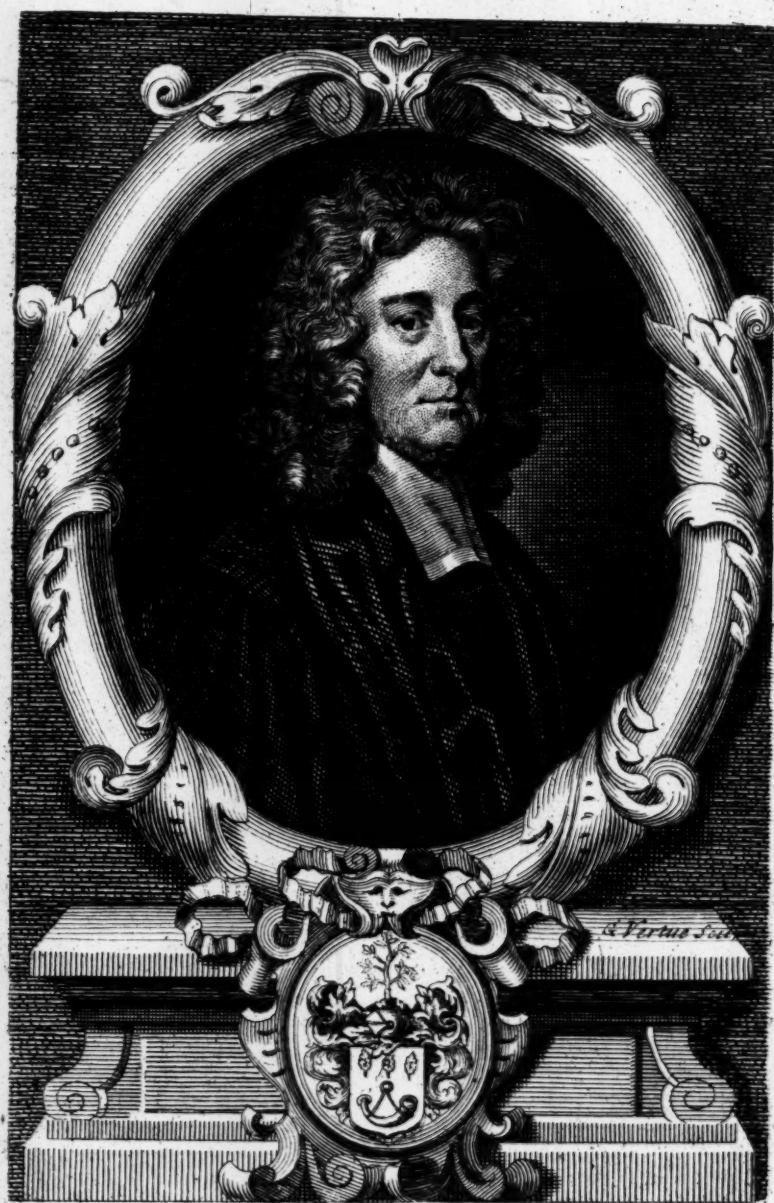
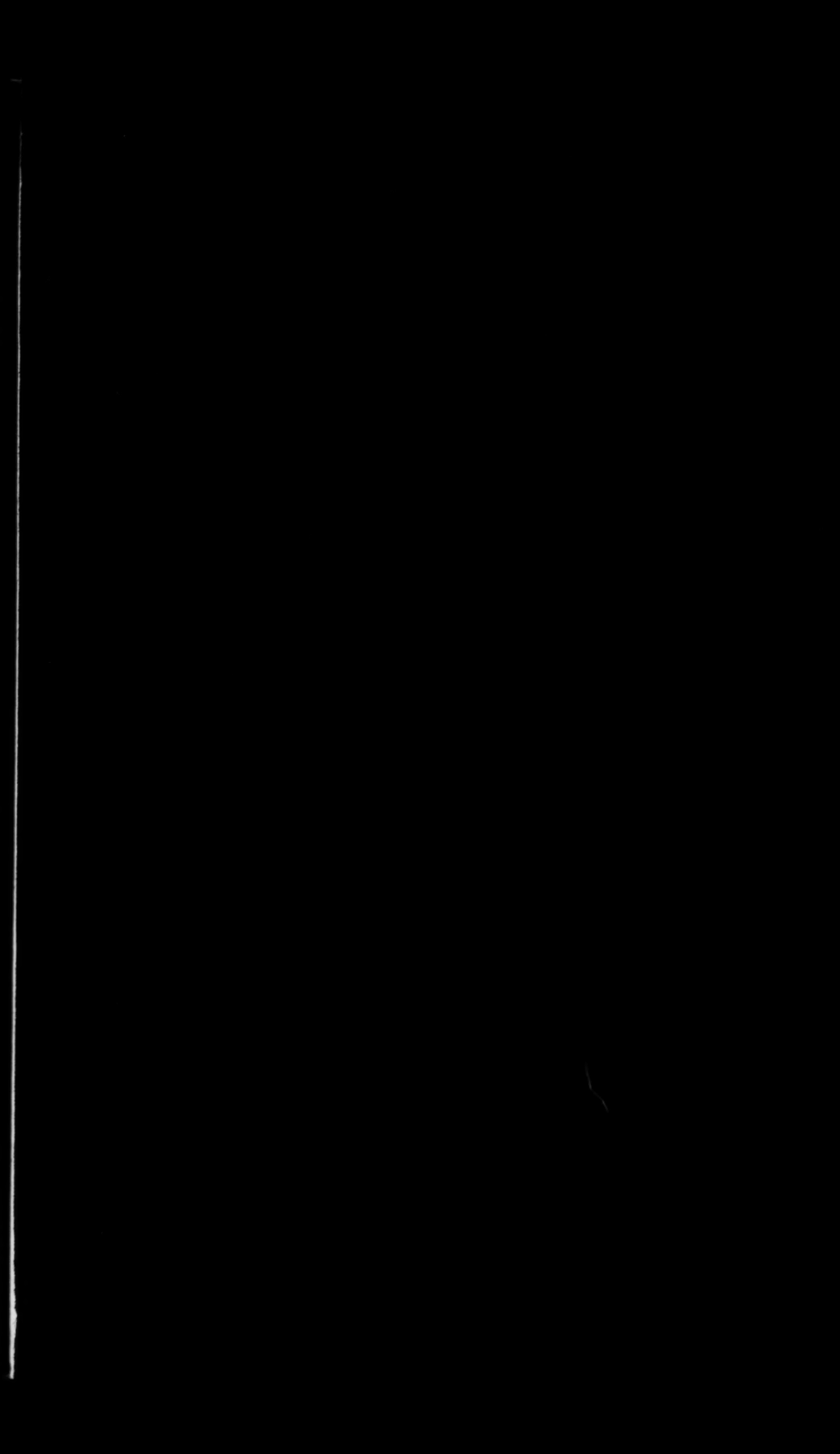




Effigies Authoris.



Effigies Authoris.



H. F. d

THE
FAITH and DUTIES
OF
CHRISTIANS.
A
TREATISE
IN
Eight CHAPTERS.

Giving an Account of

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|---|--|
| I. The Foundation of Natural and Instituted Religion. | V. Moral Rules and Precepts according to the Christian Law. |
| II. The Authority and Usefulness of the <i>Jewish</i> Religion. | VI. The Christian Articles of Faith. |
| III. The Christian Dispensation; the Nature and Author of it. | VII. The secondary Articles in the Christian Doctrine explain'd. |
| IV. The Worship of God; and its Sacred Rites, according to the Christian Law. | VIII. The Christian Church; its Government and Discipline. |

Written originally in *Latin* by the late Rev.
DR. THOMAS BURNET, Master of the
Charter-House.

Translated into *English* by Mr. DENNIS.

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. HOOKE, at the *Flower-de-Luce*,
over-against *St. Dunstan's Church* in *Fleet-Street*.





TO THE
Most Excellent Majesty
OF
CAROLINE,
QUEEN of
GREAT BRITAIN,
FRANCE, and IRELAND.

MADAM,



HOUGH no one has
had a greater Veneration
for Your Majesty than
myself, nor a greater
Admiration of Your Princely Vir-
tues; ever since this Island has
been blest'd with Your Presence,

yet I never durst presume to offer any of my own Productions to You, thro' a just Diffidence of myself: But I have now presum'd to dedicate to Your Majesty this short Treatise of the *Faith and Duties of Christians*, a Treatise now made *English* by me, but written originally, some Years since, in *Latin*, by a Reverend Divine of the Church of *England*, a Person of great Merit and of great Reputation, who seem'd to consecrate all his Labours to God, and his Vicegerents in *Great Britain*. To Your Royal Predecessor, King *Charles II.* he dedicated his Treatise concerning the *Antidiluvian World, and Paradise, and the Deluge*. To *William III.* of glorious Memory, the Immortal Founder of the *Act of Settlement*, he address'd his *Archæologia*. And he address'd his Treatise concerning the *General Conflagration, and the new Heavens, and the new Earth* that

D E D I C A T I O N.

that are to arise from the Ruins of the old, to King William's Glorious Confort, who, when she liv'd, was till then, the best of Queens that had made this Country happy, ever since the Days of great *Elizabeth*, of eternal Fame: And I have powerful Reasons to believe, that if the following Treatise had been made *English* by himself, before Her Death, he would have offer'd it likewise to that great Queen, for whom he had conceived so high an Esteem, and so profound a Veneration: For this short Treatise comprehends a whole Body of Divinity, of which she was so competent and capable a Judge, and contains, through the greatest Part of it, very solid Proofs of the Truth of the Christian Religion, of the fundamental Articles of which she was a steadfast and an intelligent Believer. This little Treatise contains likewise

wife a Defence of the Protestant Part of Christianity, to the primæval Purity of which, and the temporal and eternal Happiness of Millions of her Fellow-Creatures, she sacrific'd Things that were most dear to Her, and would have sacrific'd both Her Crown and Her Most Important Life. This little Treatise sets in an attractive and a glorious Light, the Excellence of the Christian Moral Virtues, those exalted Virtues which all shone out with so much Brightness, and with so diffusive a Light in that Religious Queen: And as she was in Possession of them all Herself, she, by Her *Example*, Her *Influence*, and Her *Authority*, dispos'd and inclin'd a corrupted World to Virtue. 'Tis for these Reasons, Madam, that if he had writ and translated this Treatise before her Death, he would have offer'd it to that excellent Queen; and for

DEDICATION. vii

for the very same Reasons, if he had now been alive, he would have consecrated it to Your Majesty. And these Reasons have prevail'd upon me, as the Interpreter of his Mind and Sense, to do what I know will be most acceptable to him, if he has any Knowledge of what is doing below. And the same Reasons have encourag'd me to hope that Your Majesty will have the Goodness to pardon the Presumption that I have shewn in giving You a distant and a shadowy View of Your own Picture, in that of Your Royal and Glorious Predecessor; and to pardon the Approach that I have ventur'd to make to Your Royal Presence, without any Introduction, but that of the highest Veneration for Your Majesty, and the warmest Zeal for the Interest and Service of the King and His Illustrious Family. These, Ma-
dam,

dam, are Qualities that alone are sufficient to give us Access to the Infinite Majesty of Him whose Vicegerent You are, and whom You resemble in Goodness and Mercy, as Your Royal Consort is the Image of His Justice and Power.

I am, MADAM,

Your MAJESTY'S

Most Humble, and

Most Obedient Subject,

J. DENNIS.

THE



THE
P R E F A C E
OF THE
TRANSLATOR.

 *Have all my Life-time been
averse to the Translating
any Thing of Length, whe-
ther it was Verse or Prose,
Grecian or Roman, Antient or Modern,
because I have always believ'd, that no
Man could ever acquire by Translation
a great and a lasting Reputation. La
Traduction, says Boileau, n'a jamais
mené personne a l'Immortalité : Never
any Man got by Translation an immortal
Repu-*

Reputation. If, in spite of the fore said Aversion, I have prevail'd upon myself to translate the following Treatise, De Fide & Officiis Christianorum, there have been two Things that have principally induc'd me to it: One of them was the Request of a Gentleman, with whom I have had the Honour to be acquainted almost fifty Years, and who is Executor to the Author, the late Reverend Master of the Charter-House. Another Motive was, that the Translation of this Book might at this Time of Day do some Good to my Countrymen; a Thing which I have all my Life-time aim'd at in all my Writings. Of all the Treatises which were writ by the most Ingenious Author, this is certainly the most useful. Some of the other Pieces shew great Learning, and great Capacity, yet many of the Positions laid down in them are rather curious and conjectural, than solid and certain, and can be of little Advantage or Entertainment

The Preface of the Translator. xi

tainment to vulgar Readers, that is, to the Generality of Mankind. But the Treatise which is now publish'd may be of Advantage to all, and to Readers of every Kind both delightful and instructive. The sixth Chapter, which gives an Account of the Christian Morality, is altogether noble; and, in my Opinion, it will be impossible to account for so perfect a System of Morals, taught by Fishermen, instructed by a Person who passed for a Carpenter's Son, without allowing them to be divinely inspir'd. If there are any Defects in the original Treatise, as where shall we find one that has not some, the judicious and impartial Reader will consider that this is a posthumous Work, and consequently has not had the last correcting Hand of the Author to it. But the Beauties of the Original, the Spirit, the Elegance, the Force, and the Grace, and the profound good Sense that are almost every where to be found

xii The Preface of the Translator.

found in it, will make ample Amends for its Defects, if it has any. As for my own Part, I have done every Thing that lay in my Power to give this Translation the Spirit, and Facility, and Freeness of an Original, because Elegance, Grace, and Harmony, depend upon the other three, without which neither Original nor Copy can be of any Value.

E R R A T A.

PAGE 8. Line 2c. for *wrapt*, read *rapt*; p. 128. l. 4. f. *Fathers*, r. *Father*; p. 190. l. 14. dele *to*; p. 191. l. 26. f. *vice versa*, r. *vice versa*; p. 207. last Line but four, f. *is*, r. *in*; p. 216. last Line but one, transpose the [.] and [;] p. 221. l. 5. after *Epicures*, add *spring*; p. 233. l. 26. f. *reside*, r. *preside*; p. 234. l. 10. f. *reside*, r. *preside*; p. 253. l. 24. f. *altogether*, r. *all together*.

T H E



OF THE
Faith and Duties
OF
CHRISTIANS.

C A P. I.

The Argument and Design of the Work.



HAT the whole Christian Doctrine is contain'd in Canonical Scripture, or in the sacred Writings of the Jews and Christians, is what we have taken for granted: Nor have we any Design at present to vindicate the Authority of those Writings, which has been so excellently perform'd by others. But we shall endeavour in

B

such

such a Manner to explain the Doctrine describ'd in those sacred Records, that the Christian Religion may appear to all who are inclined to examine it, to be an Institution worthy of God, and framed for the temporal and eternal Happiness of all Mankind; and that nothing can hinder us (excepting the Vices in our own Breasts) from embracing this Religion preferrably to all others, as a celestial System of Laws, and a Present from God himself, and from shewing our Obedience to its Precepts and Doctrines, both by the Constancy of our Faith, and the Uprightness of our Lives.

OUR principal Design in this Dissertation is to explain the Points which follow. To shew as clearly as we can, with our utmost Endeavour, both the Way and the Guide to Salvation, which the Christian Religion appoints for us: To shew the Precepts which it has given us as the Rules of Life and Manners. What Assistance it has promis'd to our sincere Endeavours for the obtaining of Virtue and Piety. Then what divine Worship and what sacred Rites it has instituted. After this, we shall enquire upon what Dogma's the Christian Faith is grounded; what it proposes, new or mystical, concerning the divine or human Nature, or the external World. Lastly,

Lastly, we shall enquire what are its Doctrines concerning eternal Rewards and Punishments; what Felicity it promises to its Disciples, what Misery it threatens to Unbelievers, and to immoral Livers. Upon explaining these, and Things of the like Nature, this whole Dissertation will turn.

AMONG those Things which the Philosophers formerly objected to Christians, there were principally two: The first was their Credulity, or the Rashness of their Belief in receiving their Religion, and their Obstinacy in defending it. The second is, the Imbecillity, and Impotency, and Incapacity, of that Religion, to restore and make perfect, and, if I may so express myself, to beatify the human Soul. As for what relates to the first, we find that *Celsus*, in *Origen*, generally compares Christians L. 1; to the Rabble; "Who (says he) by reason
 " of their Credulity, are easily deceiv'd
 " by Impostors: Nor (says he) will they
 " suffer their Faith to be brought to an
 " Examination. Some of them (he continues) refuse either to give or receive
 " any Account of their Faith; and that
 " nothing is more usual with them than
 " that Saying, *Examine not, but believe, and thy Faith shall save thee.*
 " And that they are wont to say, that
 B 2 " worldly

“ worldly Wisdom is evil, but that Folly
 “ is good.” ’Tis with Confusion that I
 hear those Scandals thrown upon Chris-
 tians, though temerariouſly, I hope,
 and invidiouſly. If there are Chriſtians
 who may ſeem to deſerve this; if there
 are any who can endure to be thus drow-
 zy, and nodding in their Religion, and rea-
 dy to fall faſt aſleep, upon them let theſe
 Stings of the Enemy fall, and penetrate
 them, and awaken them. As for us, we are
 reſolved to be watchful, and prepar’d and
 determin’d to defend the Province en-
 truſted to us; we fly from no Examination
 of our Faith, nor do we require that
 it ſhould be receiv’d by any until they
 have thoroughly examin’d it, whether
 they ground that Examen upon the pro-
 phetick Records, or upon the Hiſtory
 of the Actions of Chriſt and his Apoſ-
 tles, or upon the Nature and Genius of
 the Doctrin itſelf. We ſhall except
 againſt no kind of Argument, againſt
 no Manner of Topick, from which
 Truth may be drawn, and ſhine, and
 give Light to the World.

As for what relates to the ſecond
 Thing objected to us by the Philoſo-
 phers, ’tis common to Chriſtians, with
 Jews and Heathens of all Sorts, who
 obſerve any Form of Religion, or Wor-
 ſhip of God, or Gods: For *Porphyrius*,
 a Man

of Christians.

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a Man of great Wit and Learning among the *Grecians*, has dar'd to pronounce this Sentence against all Religions whatever, that have been hitherto propos'd for the Government of Mankind, *That no Religion and no Philosophical Sect had been hitherto receiv'd, which contain'd a universal Method of freeing the Soul,* viz. of freeing it from its Defilements, and restoring it to its primitive Felicity and Perfection: For that was what *Porphyrus* requir'd, it not being hitherto, says he, come to his Knowledge, that such a universal Way to human Happiness was to be found, either in any philosophical Sect, or in any publick Religion.

St. August,
C. D. l. x.
c. 32. Vid.
etiam,
c. 11.

WHAT *Porphyrus* found wanting in every other Religion, viz. eternal Life and eternal Happiness, Christ, our Captain and Legislator, has shewn us, and shewn us the certain Way to them: *I*, says he, *am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life*, *Joh. xiv. 6.* And he has told us, *that all Power is given to him both in Heaven and in Earth*, *Mat. xxviii. 18.* Not only in Earth and in Heaven, but *that the Keys of Death and of Hell have been deliver'd to him*, *Apoc. i. 18.* Now this Fulness of Power, and the Right of bestowing eternal Life, which Christ has thus asserted in Words, he has demonstrated, by several Ways, that he

actually had; as first, by many and astonishing Miracles, even by the Raising of the Dead to Life; then, by his own Resurrection and Ascension; and after his Ascension, by the Effusion of his Holy Spirit, as it were, an Earnest, and a certain Præsentiment of that Life and eternal Inheritance. But these Things shall be more amply explain'd, when we treat of the Legislator's Authority.

IN the mean while, behold the ultimate End, the End that was most desired, *viz.* eternal Life and a blissful Immortality, the Return of the Soul to Heaven, Luk.xx.36. its native Country, and to the Enjoyments of Angels and the Sons of God: Thus Christ has explain'd eternal Life, and thus the Philosophers understand it. Now, if you enquire, on whom and on what Conditions Christ will bestow this eternal Life, he answers himself, *Joh. xi. 25. I am the Resurrection, and the Life; and whoever believes in me, shall have eternal Life, and I will raise him up at the last Day.* That is, whoever believes in me, and embraces my Law, rejecting every one that is oppos'd to it, *whether it be of the Jews or Gentiles,* this Reward will I give him, this Remuneration will I bestow on him, as soon as he has ended this Life, I will make him Partaker of Immortality, and of everlasting

verlasting Beatitude. This is often repeated by Christ, as Occasion is offer'd, in other Discourses, and other Conversations, *Joh. iii. 15. chap. vi. 40. chap. x. 28. chap. xvii. 2, 3.*

AND we find the Doctrine of the Apostles, the first Preachers of the Gospel, agreeing exactly with him in every Thing. They every where preach up and bear witness to both the ready Will and the Power of Christ to procure the Salvation of Mankind, and every where extol the Force and the Excellence of that Institution preferrably to all others. *For I am not ashamed, saith St. Paul, Rom. i. 16, of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the Power of God unto Salvation to every one that believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. Neither is there, saith St. Peter, Salvation in any other; for there is no other Name under Heaven given among Men, whereby we must be saved, Acts iv. 12.* And the very same Witnesses affirm, that this Saviour God, has both the Will and the Power to raise the human Soul to a Participation of the divine Nature, and the same Body to a Participation of the divine Form, *2 Pet. i. 4. Phil. iii. 21.* Than which Reward, than which Glory, human Nature is capable of receiving nothing more illustrious, and the most am-

bitious Philosophy can be desirous of nothing more exalted. But more of this hereafter.

THIS have we said in answer to *Porphyrius*. But whereas he affirms that all the sacred Rites, and that all the Religions, either of Jews or Gentiles, are unequal to the great Design of delivering and emancipating the human Soul from its Servitude to the Body, and incapable of purging it, and preparing it, for the Enjoyment of that celestial Life after which we pant; this we are ready to acknowledge, and together with him affirm. But an entire and absolute Emancipation is not to be expected before the Dissolution of this Body, and the Renovation of this external World with whose continual Circumvolutions we are together wrapt and hurried, *Rom. viii. 19, 20, 21, 22, 23. Eph. i. 13, 14.* Christians in the mean while are again and again commanded to acquire Purity of Mind and Body, as far as it may be practicable, (nor is eternal Salvation promis'd to any but the pure and holy;) and they are every where reminded that Sanctity is a necessary Condition of obtaining that Salvation. But then the Faculties of the Soul, are several Ways sharpen'd and assisted in the Acquisition of this Purity, that is, by the Purity of the Law

Rom. i.
Heb. x.

Heb. xii.
14.

of Christians.

9

Law, the Purity of the Worship, and the Pattern of the purest and most perfect Example; and lastly, by the Influx of the holy Spirit, and the influential Force of the Promises for the obtaining eternal Life, 1 Cor. xv. 58. and 2 Cor. vii. 1. Heb. xii. 1, 2.

AND thus you see the Christian Religion is so prepar'd and fram'd, that the Things which are defective in the Rest, and wanting to Fullness and Perfection, those very Things are entire in this Institution, and compleat in all their Numbers; and this whether you respect the End propos'd, or the properest Means and Instruments for the obtaining of that End: And now only one Thing remains, and that is, that we proceed to shew, that these Things are instituted by divine Authority, and by the same confirm'd; so that 'tis impossible they can be without their Effect; nor have we any Reason to comprehend that our Hope and Expectation should be frustrated; which, I perswade myself, will plainly appear by the Order and Arguments of the Work which follows.

AND thus far in general, by way of Preface, we have address'd ourselves to the Philosophers. What may be further objected by God's antient People the
Jews,

Jews, concerning our Messiah and his new Law, that we shall treat of towards the End of the following Work, that we may return a just and a friendly Answer to every Adversary of our Faith, let him be Greek or Jew, provided he proposes to give Reasons for his Infidelity. And thus we shall maintain the Honour of our Religion, when we shall make it plainly appear, that we are not at all afraid of its Enemies, and that nothing is to be fear'd from them in any Disputation becoming of generous Disputants, provided that on our Sides, neither Courage nor Counsel is wanting to so good a Cause. Having spoke thus briefly by way of Preface, let us proceed to the Work itself.

C H A P. II.

Of Natural Religion, universal and immutable: then of Instituted Religion, and the general Foundation of it in its singular Institutions.

ALL true Religion, whether divinely or humanly instituted, has its Foundation in natural Religion. This therefore ought to be first of all considered:

dered: Now natural Religion principally consists in this, that we acknowledge one supreme God of all Things, the Creator and Governor; and that we likewise acknowledge the true Difference of Things, according to the Nature of True and False, Good and Evil, Vile and Generous, Just and Unjust; then, that we believe the future Distribution of Rewards and Punishments, as far as it can be prov'd from these. On these Foundations stands that Religion which may be called primary, on which all secondary Religions are as so many Superstructures, which are wont to be called OEconomies, or Laws, or sacred Institutions, or Dispensations. Now these OEconomies and Institutions are greatly diversified, according to the different Natures of Times, Climates, and Nations: Then they vastly differ according to the Orders of intellectual Beings, and the Difference of those numerous Worlds, in which they assume various Forms and Habits: For whereas in an animal Body there are certain *Stamina* which are necessary to Life and Sense, and without which the animal Nature can neither be constituted nor exist, tho' at the same Time there are various Forms and Figures of these Bodies, with the Addition of apt Organs and
Parts,

Parts, according to the various Natures of Birds, Beasts, Fishes, and Reptiles, and all the rest of those sundry Creatures that enjoy Life and Sense; so the Forms, the Appearances, and the Constitutions of Religion are various, as the State and Order of Things, is various, according to the Foreknowledge, and the Decrees of the most wise Creator and Governor: For all of them participate more or less of the same intimate Nature, and, as it were, the same radical Moisture, without which they could have no Force, no Influence, either vital or divine.

THE Consequence of all this is, or rather 'tis supplied and interwoven with it, that the natural Religion of which we speak, is universal and unchangeable, which cannot be affirmed of any instituted Religion. I call it universal in the largest Sense, as to all Times, Climates, and People; nor do I affirm it only of this Globe, but of all the rest, whatever are inhabited through the vast Compass of the Universe: For as Colours are various in various Bodies, according to the Difference of the Subject Matter; but the Light which falls upon them is one and the same, and has divers Modifications from divers Bodies; so natural Religion being every where
the

the same in itself, yet has various Modifications from divers OEconomies, and is diversly painted and represented, as it were, by the Intermixture of Shadows; nor is it just to believe, as we hinted before, that this Variety has only Place with us, the wretched Inhabitants of this paltry Globe, but through all the immense and remote Regions of the Universe, wherever Creatures capable of Reason and of Religion dwell, there does this Variety shine, this surprizing Beauty, and this various working Wisdom.

THIS must be likewise observed, that the more excellent intelligent Natures are, and of a sublimer Order, by so much the purer, and the clearer, will be the Religion by which they are guided: As when from Earth you ascend towards Heaven, the higher you climb, by so much the brighter will be your Sky, by so much the purer Air will you draw. But if you downwards cast your Eyes, you see a thick, and more turbid Light, a Light intermix'd with Shadows, and Smoke, and Clouds, so in superior Natures, the nearer by passing through several Degrees, you come to the supreme Deity, by so much is God worshipped, and the Duties of Virtue, and Piety, are perform'd by each of them, with a purer and chaster Understanding,

derstanding, and a more ardent Will and Affection. But in inferior Regions, there is a more shadowy Form of Religion, and more accommodated to the Natures, and the Infirmities of whatever may be the Inhabitants.

Aug. de C.
D. l. vi. c.
5,

ANTIEN Sages divided Religion into *Vulgar* and *Philosophical*; and among the *Romans*, the learned *Varro*, again subdivided the *Vulgar* into the *Poetical* and *Political*. Nor was this Distinction in the Heathen Religion amiss, as it was mix'd and impure, and very different with the *Vulgar*, from what it was with the *Wise*. But we allow of nothing to be a Part of Natural Religion, that is either the Invention of Poets or Politicians. And yet, as the same Author observed, I am oblig'd to confess, that there are several Truths which 'tis not convenient that the *Vulgar* should know; and if there are Things which being nakedly, and simply propounded, would not attain the End that is aim'd at by them, in Treating of them, 'tis convenient to depress our Style to the Level of common Understandings, and to the Capacity of the People.

WE have moreover said above, that Natural Religion is *Eternal* and *Immutable*; which is evident from hence, that it has its Root in the Divine Nature,

ture, which is eternal and unchangeable. Truth, Goodness, Justice, Sanctity, are originally in God, as in their Source and Fountain. And by these Perfections of the Divine Nature, the Perfection of every rational Creature is to be esteem'd and measur'd. And the more perfect every one is, by so much the more happy. Wherefore both the Nature of the Thing, and the End and Design of Duty, and the inborn Thirst that every one has after his own Happiness, all these do by a most powerful Influence urge us, to cultivate inwardly, and to practise outwardly, to the utmost of our Power, the Truth, Justice, Goodness, and all the other imitable Perfections of God. And when the immutable, and inflexible Nature of God, is the Rule of these Perfections, as we observed before, that Religion of Nature, that is agreeable, and answerable to this Rule, is in this Part of it immoveable and unchangeable.

Thus far we have treated of Natural Religion, according to the innate Distinctions of Things, of Good and Evil, of Base and Worthy, which are always to be observed in the forming the Life and Manners. The other Part of Natural Religion regards the Worship of God, and that Piety that is due to the

the supreme Deity. Now true Piety is an Adoration of God, according to the Dignity and the Perfection of his Nature; and it either respects the Mind alone, and consists in Meditation and Contemplation, and those ardent affectionate Breathings after God, which take their Rise from the other, which is call'd internal Piety. Or Piety is external, and is perform'd by the Help of the Body, by the pouring forth Praises and Prayers to God, with all the decent and becoming Ornament of external Worship. For here I cannot allow that Natural Religion should be painted utterly naked, without any Manner of Dress or Ornament; like a Birth that is newly come from the Womb, or the Earth, despoil'd by Winter, of all the Fruits and Flowers that are wont to adorn it: Natural Religion is rather wont to superabound in these, and to incline to Superstition; so that for the most Part, something ought to be prun'd from these, to restrain their Luxuriancy. I would have all that is superfluous, and superstitious, cast entirely off from it: Yet some external Worship will still remain, and those sacred Rites, and those wholesome Institutions of Piety, which in Nature's Self are founded. Such are spiritual Hymns, and Praises, and Prayers,

ers, and solemn Supplications in publick Congregations. Such likewise are the Confessions of Sins and Prayers for the averting of Judgments; as likewise the ordinary establish'd Forms and Professions of Faith in God, which in Nature's Self are founded. All these have Place in Natural Religion, and likewise Festivals set apart for the performing of sacred Rites, and Discourses to the People, and Exhortations to Virtue, to Piety, to Repentance and Reformation; or lastly, whatever may contribute to the averting the Wrath of God, or to the obtaining his Blessings, or may be for publick or private Good, according to the best and truest Light of Nature: All these are to be engrafted and adopted into Natural Religion.

THE Soil of Nature is not so barren that it can bear neither Fruits nor Herbs; and they who are for painting Natural Religion like a dry and consumptive Body, depriv'd of Blood, and even of radical Moisture, consult neither the Glory of the high God, nor the Dignity of Mankind. What was the Religion that render'd *Enoch* pleasing to God? What were the Stairs by which he ascended to Heaven? Can you believe that that could be a languid, that could be an enervate Virtue, by which

C a living

a living Man could be translated to Heaven? When * *Noah* appear'd just and perfect in the Eye of God, what Law had the Rule of his Life, and the Direction of his Manners, but the Law of natural Conscience? What shall I say of *Abel*? who in the World, then newly created, was the second or third from *Adam*, many Ages before *Moses* liv'd; yet he is pronounc'd *just* by Christ, and number'd among the Saints, *Mat.* xxiii.

35. Lastly, what was the Faith by which *Abraham* and the rest of the Patriarchs, long before the Promulgation of the *Mosaick* Law, were acceptable to God? The Law that was born with us had its Birth coæval to that of the World. The written Law did not take Place till two thousand Years after the World was created; nor yet has the Knowledge of it reach'd, or enlighten'd the greatest Part of Mankind? What, shall we believe that all these have eternally perish'd, or must perish eternally? *Those*, I say, *who having no external Law, were a Law to themselves, and shew'd the Force of the Law written in their Hearts, their Consciences also bearing*

Rom. ii.
14, 15.

* Tertull. advers. Jud. c. 2. p. 184. Unde Noe justus inventus si non &c. adde Notam Pamelii ex Origene, ibid. Vid. & de coron. Militis, c. 6.

bearing Witness, and their Thoughts accusing, or excusing one another. Him too I call to Witness, that noble *Arabian, Job*, the Servant of God; yes, the Servant of God I call him, because by the Testimony of God himself *he was perfect and upright, fearing God, and eschewing Evil.* What Heroick Virtues did he not practise, as we are told by sacred Story? What Force and Constancy of Mind did he not shew? What noble Instructions did he not leave us, both by his Words and Actions: I mention not others of different Ages and Nations, who are already sufficiently known: * Nor can I believe that these excellent Persons were wise for themselves alone; but that each of them celebrated in his particular Family, or Tribe, or Dominion, some certain Kind of divine Worship, pure, chaste, and pleasing to God, and bringing Salvation to them and theirs. Such are the Worshipers, and such the Worship, which this sincere and incorrupted Religion of Nature, of which we are treating, requires:

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* Οἱ μὲν λόγῳ βιώσαντες, &c. Justin. Apol. 2. p. 83. De in Dial. cum Tryph. in p. 263. Ἐπεὶ οἱ τὰ καθόλου, καὶ φύσει, καὶ διόνα καλὰ ἔποιον, ἐν ἁρεσὶ εἰς τὸ Θεῷ. Nam qui ea fecerunt, quæ universum, & naturâ & perpetuò pulchra sunt. Deo benè placent.

quires : But let us pass to Religion divinely or humanly instituted.

ALL instituted Religion, of what kind soever it is, is made up of two Parts, the Common and the Proper: That which it partakes of Natural Religion, that I call the Common; and what it has new and superadded to this, that I call Proper, and peculiar to it. And this latter may be said to be the Body of Religion, and the former the Soul: For Piety and natural Probity are, as it were, the Nerves and Fibres of every genuine Religion, or they are like the Blood in the Body, which is diffused through the Whole, and carries with it Life, and Strength, and Health, and Vigour, and a Juice that is fitted for the Nourishment of every Part of it; nay, even in Religion that is divinely instituted, and is therefore true, the natural Part is superior, and controuls the other as often as they interfere, and so obstruct each other, that there is a Necessity that one of them should be intermitted. This is evident both in the Jewish and Christian OEconomies, instituted by God himself. In that of the Heathens it was not always so: And yet even among them their most excellent Men preferr'd natural Sanctity and internal Virtue, to all Rites and all Institutions

tutions whatever, as we shall prove below. In the mean Time, it will be worth our while to compare those sacred Laws, of what Rank soever they may be, with the Law of Nature; that we may by that Means see what Room the Law of Nature takes up in them all.

As for the Judaical Law, 'tis very well known that the Decalogue is the principal Part of it; and that it is founded for the greatest Part of it in the Law of Nature, that is, in Duties which we are oblig'd to perform both to God and Man, from what is just and upright, and fitting, and decent, and worthy. This Love and Veneration of God, and the Love of our Neighbour, are declared by Christ to be the two greatest Precepts of the Law, *Mat. xxii. 37, 38, 39, 40.* Because upon these two, says he, hang all the Law and the Prophets. Nor were the wiser Part of the Jews of another Opinion. The Jewish Doctors affirm, that the Design which *Moses* first propos'd to himself, was to make the Decalogue alone, or the Tables of the Ten Commandments, the whole Law of the *Israelites*; but when upon his Return from the Mountain, he found that the Genius of that People was most prone to Idolatry, who had taken Occasion from so short an Absence to

Vid. Jer.
vii. 22, 23.

make a *Golden Calf*, and to set him up for the God of *Israel*: When *Moses* saw this, he chang'd his Design, and concluded within himself, that People had Occasion for a Religion, which would find them Work, which at the same Time would keep their Minds employed, and their Thoughts entirely intent, and taken up with their sacred Rites, lest, debauch'd by Ease, and by their own superstitious Inclinations, they should degenerate into Idolatry. It was from this Motive that he added to the Simplicity of so pure a Law, a very great Number of Rites and Ceremonies, which were indeed useful to this Purpose, but in all other Respects a very grievous Load, and an insupportable Burden; but he added these Rites and Ceremonies after such a Manner, that under these Shadows natural Justice should always remain entire, should always be preserv'd inviolable and unchangeable. When *Flavius Josephus*, a Man of the greatest Knowledge and Experience in these Things, had explain'd the Decrees of *Cesar* and the *Roman* Governors, that were given in favour of the Jewish Nation, he adds what follows in Defence of their Law: *No Nation in the World*, says he, *uses the same Custom, and the same Manners perpetually;*

perpetually; but they change and differ almost in every Town: But Justice is always equally useful to all; of equal Utility to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; to the Observation of which there is the strictest Injunction in our Laws, which, if we can but preserve inviolated, will render all Nations friendly to us, and render us Friends to all. And here he has justly distinguish'd between that which is particular to every Religion in their sacred Rites, and that which is common to all. This he calls τὸ δίκαιον & τὸ κοινὸν ἅγαν, which is every where to be observed. All the Jews, who are of sounder Understanding than the rest, are of the same Opinion concerning the Difference and Distinction of Things, in the Constitution of their Law.

* THE Prophets, moreover, who follow'd Moses, have inculcated the same Distinction, with regard to the Things which are either commanded or forbidden by the Law. They every where set a far greater Esteem and Value upon Justice, Probity, Mercy, and the other Virtues of innate Dignity, than on Sacrifices and Victims, and Rites and Ceremonies

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* Vide Maimon. Mor. Nev. p. 3. cap. 32. Non aliud Gentes prudentiores. Lactant. lib. vi. c. 8. p. 525.

remonies of any kind whatever. And they sometimes introduce God rejecting these latter with Indignation and Disdain, as Things, in comparison of the former, superfluous and contemptible. See what the Prophets *David*, *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, *Hosea*, and *Micah*, write concerning this Matter, and you will find that they vehemently expostulate with the superstitious Jews, as with those who abus'd the Law, *Psalms* 1. *Isa.* i. 11, &c. *Jer.* vi. 20. *Hos.* vi. 6. *Mich.* vi. 6, &c.

Mat. xxiii.

23. & xii.

7. Luc. xi.

39, 40, 41.

Mat. v.

23, 24.

AND lastly, as the Prophets before, so did afterwards Christ, the last and greatest Expounder of the *Mosaick* Law, who often upbraided the Jews with wholly neglecting, or at least ill observing the foresaid Distinction of Things that are more or less sacred. Those Things that are good in themselves, and are always good, he calls τὰ καὶ πάντα καὶ ὅτις, *Legis graviora capita*, the weightier Chapters of the Law, which weigh down all the rest, though even they are harmless, and constituted by an external and a temporary Law. And when the Jews adher'd to their Rituals, preferring them to these, and that under a Prætext of Religion, Christ accuses them of Hypocrisy, and threatens them with Judgments, and with the Wrath to come,

come, for making the Word of God of no Effect by their Traditions. And this was the Case of the Jewish Law, with respect to the Law of Nature. We come now to that of the Christians.

Mat. xxiii.
14. Mar.
vii. 11, 12,
13.

CHRIST has told us that he did not come to *dissolve or destroy the Mosaick Law*, but that he came to *fulfil it*, Mat. v. 17. But how did he fulfil it? What Law did he not destroy? He utterly destroy'd, and abolish'd the Ceremonial Law: Witness the Apostle in his Epistle to the *Ephesians*, chap. ii. 15. and often in other Places, τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασι καταργήσας, *Legem præceptorum in ritibus abolens*, abolishing the Precepts of the Law concerning Ceremonies. Besides, the Thing speaks for itself. The Judaical Law among Christians grew obsolete, and vanish'd; otherwise they had not been Christians, as distinct from the Jews. It vanish'd, as Shadows fly before the Light of the Sun. But perhaps after all, you may still enquire what did Christ not dissolve? What Part did he preserve? I answer, the moral, natural, and eternal Part of it; and therefore the principal and more excellent Part of it, which, in the Intention both of the Law and the Legislator, was to be instead of the whole. He fulfilled indeed the typical and shadowy Part

Part of it, and by fulfilling, abolish'd it, *Tit. ii. 11, 12, 13.* For the Grace of God that bringeth Salvation, hath appeared to all Men, teaching us, that denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World: Looking for that blessed Hope, and the glorious Appearance of that great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works. This is the Design, this is the Fruit of the Gospel.

Mat. v. 45.
1 Joh. iii.
 3.

JESUS Christ commands us to endeavour to attain Perfection; to imitate God as well in Goodness as in Sanctity and Purity. He commands us to look into the very lucid Fountain of Goodness, of Beauty, of Justice, and of Sanctity, that we may be conformable to the divine Image, and Partakers of the divine Nature. This is the very Summit of ours, and of every true Religion: Nothing can be express'd, nothing can be thought more sublimely, than the being like to the original Pattern of all Goodness, who is infinitely perfect. Besides, both Christ and his Apostles look down upon the external Piety of Rites and Ceremonies, compar'd to the internal

nal Habit of the Mind, and the Renovation of the Soul, after the Image of God, and primæval Righteousness. Many Admonitions and Precepts of this kind, are every where spread through the Christian Canon, and delivered so clearly, that they can be concealed from none. Lastly, the Apostle, in his *Epistle to the Philippians*, makes a summary Recapitulation of all these, by the way, as it were, of Epilogizing. Finally, Brethren, *whatsoever Things are true, whatsoever Things are venerable, whatsoever Things are just*, (whether by the Law of Nature, or Nations, or our own) *whatsoever Things are holy*, (or pure,) *whatsoever Things are lovely, whatsoever Things are of good Reputation* (with all Mankind;) *if there be any Virtue*, (or what is esteemed as such among good Men;) *if there be any Praise*, (or any Thing worthy of Praise, or of the Approbation of the Wise,) *think on these Things*, (that is, these Things cultivate in your Minds, and these outwardly practise.)

Cap. iv. 8.

THIS apostolical Recapitulation, under various Titles and Names, comprehends all the Grounds of Perfection and of eternal Truths, which Nature has sown in the Minds of Men, and the universal Consent of the Wise, has established,

blish'd. And of the Meditation on these, and the Practice of them, the whole Duty of a Christian is constituted.

HITHERTO we have treated of the Jewish and Christian Religion, and have shewn, that they are founded on Natural Religion. The Heathen Religion remains, which is wont to be call'd the *Religion of Nature*, because it has the Addition of no Revelation or divine Institution: But 'tis indeed exceedingly different from that Natural Religion, of which we have given some Idea in the former Chapter. We must therefore distinguish between Natural Religion which is pure, and that which is impure. We have painted the first in its naked Beauty, without any Ornaments, but without any Stains. But the Religion is in many respects impure, which formerly took Place among the Heathens, and which still takes Place in some Measure, and is so over-run with Vices, and with frantick Rites, that the very Seeds of Virtue and Piety seem to be choak'd in it. But that these Things may be impartially weigh'd, let us a little consider its State, both with Regard to its moderate Errors, and to its most pernicious ones. First, as they respect the Deity, or Deities which they worship'd. Then as they relate to the Worship it self, and

to

to their sacred Rites: And, Lastly, as they regard their Manners and their Notions of a future State.

It seems to be an Opinion among the Learned, that the Heathens among so many Deities, worshipp'd one supreme and most high God. Nor cou'd it be otherwise, if we rightly consider the Thing; for numerous Gods, and every one supreme, are Notions that are inconceivable. For if you come to divide them into superior and inferior Orders, you must at last come up to the highest Order. Nor in that is it possible to imagine there can be many Gods who are equal among themselves. For that there can be several Deities infinitely perfect, Almighty, and Self-existing, is repugnant to all the Dictates of Reason. However, the Heathens in this are blameable, that besides the most high God, they worship'd others inferior to him. Nor was that only us'd by the Vulgar, but approv'd of by their Philosophers, and by their Sages. Ἀθανάτους μὲν πρῶτα

αἰετῶς, &c. say the *Pythagoreans*, nor do the *Platonicks*, and others differ from them. Plat. in Epinom. m. p. 984. de Leg. l. 4.

But we Christians, as the Jews were formerly, are forbid to worship any Thing, except the most high God. But it was reckon'd no Crime in them, who enjoy'd only the Light of Nature, to pay

pay due Honours and Veneration to some particular Orders of intellectual Beings, to each according to its Degree, to its Rank and Dignity, but after a very different Manner, and with a very distinguish'd Zeal, always chiefly regarding the supreme God, of all Things the Creator and Governor. However since nothing certain appear'd to them concerning those subordinate Deities, it had been much safer to offer up Sacrifice, Vows, and Prayers, only to that God who is supremely great and good, of all Things the Creator and Governor, than to beg Assistance of unknown Deities, and to pour forth vain and fruitless Sounds to be scatter'd and lost in Air.

BUT you will say, perhaps, that the Gods of the Gentiles were not unknown Gods. They ador'd the Sun, the Moon, and the Stars of Heaven, Gods the most glorious Objects of Sight, and known to all the Universe which they enlighten. Yes, they were known to all the World, indeed, as great and glorious Bodies; but that they were Deities, and worthy of Adoration, that their very Worshippers cou'd never discover. But they had by some Means or other entertain'd an Opinion that those Stars were mov'd by informing Minds, or Genius's, or Intelligences, illustrious, past all Manner of Doubt,

Doubt, and as it were Divine. For they saw, and felt the daily Gifts of the Heavens, the friendly Light and beneficent Rays of the Sun, which give Life and Spirit to every Thing below. And it was their Opinion, that they could not otherwise do Honour to so much Majesty, or return Thanks for so great Benefits worthily, than by paying Divine Worship to these celestial Luminaries.

ALL this, indeed, carries with it a kind of specious Excuse, but not the Force of a just and lawful Defence; slight Conjectures are not to be depended on in any weightier Matters, and nothing particularly in sacred Matters ought to be rashly attempted, lest we should fall either into Idolatry, or a vitious *εὐσεβειολατρία*. However, the Error of the Heathens had not been so grievous, if they had worshipp'd only the Host of Heaven, and their own immortal Gods. But they enroll'd in the List of their Gods, not only the Souls of departed Men, nay, not only Animals, void of Reason, but vile, obscene and filthy Creatures. *They changed, as St. Paul says, the Glory of the incorruptible God, into an Image made like to corruptible Man, and to Birds, and four-footed Beasts, and creeping Things.* And as frail and mortal Men,
who

who had departed this Life, were exalted into Gods, so some Nations, throwing away all Sense of Shame, worshipp'd with an impudent Stupidity, not only Creatures void of Reason, but Creatures void of Life: Thus confounding the Nature of Things, to the Scandal of the Divinity, and the Disgrace of Human Reason.

BUT besides these monstrous Gods on the one Side, and these puny Gods on the other, they imputed Things to their greater Gods that were both absurd and filthy: Thus doubly disturbing the Order of Things, by exalting the vilest into the Place of celestial Beings, and by depressing celestial Natures to groveling earthly Vices. Among their Deities, they plac'd Males and Females, Gods and Goddeses, of different Sexes, as it were so many Animals, and shamelessly transferr'd to celestial Beings Copulations and Adulteries, and all that Beasts, or Men, like Beasts, commit. Thus confounding Heaven and Earth, with the Highest of Things the Lowest, and with the Lowest the Highest, they reduc'd the Providence of God, and this lovely Order and Nature of Things to a Kind of Chaos.

AND as the Heathens made themselves Gods who had nothing at all of Divinity,

Divinity, so for their worship they instituted sacred Rites that had nothing sacred in them; thus their Gods and Rites were equal. So blind in the Darkness of this Life, and obnoxious to so many Errors, is at least the Vulgar of Mankind in Things about Religion: Nor yet is this entirely to be imputed to Human Nature; for I make no Manner of Doubt, but that evil Spirits were busy in sowing, and cherishing, and augmenting Errors of this Nature, and that they greatly promoted them.

AND yet notwithstanding all these Obstructions, the Force of the Law of Nature shone out in the Theology of the Gentiles, and sometimes in their Manners, who very often faithfully distinguish'd between Just and Unjust, between Vile and Worthy. This *St. Paul* testifies in his Epistle to the *Romans*, chap. ii. ver. 14, 15. *For when the Gentiles who have not the Law, do by Nature the Things contain'd in the Law, these having not the Law, are a Law unto themselves, which shew the Work of the Law written in their Hearts, their Conscience also bearing Witness, and their Thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing one another.* And here behold the very Root of all Virtue and Piety, that is, natural Conscience, which was not

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indeed wholly extinguish'd among the Gentiles, but was among many of them too much corrupted, by that impure and superstitious Worship which the Devil had introduced among them, among some of them indeed of the soundest Understanding, whom the Errors in external Worship are wont least to infect, appearing with some Vigour. And as the Jews superstitiously adhering to the Additions, or to the secondary Part of the Law, after they had obscur'd, and as it were blunted the Force, and the principal Scope of it, were admonish'd by the Prophets to look to the more weighty, and the primary Points of it; compar'd to which the rest is vile and wretched: So Philosophers, and philosophizing Poets, reminded the Gentiles, that tho' several Acts of Worship were perform'd with Pomp in the Temple, and greatly esteem'd by the Vulgar, yet that a pure Mind, a Mind tenacious of Good and Just, was chiefly pleasing to the Gods.

*Compositum jus fāsque animi, sanctōsque recessus
Mentis, & incoctum generoso pectus honesto,
Hec cedò ut admoveam templis, & farre litabo.*

*A Soul, where Laws, both Human and Divine,
In Practice more than Speculation shine:*

*A genuine Virtue, of a vigorous kind,
Pure in the last Recesses of the Mind:*

When with such Off'rings to the Gods I come;

A Cake, thus giv'n, is worth a Hecatomb.

Perfius, Sat. 2.

And

And several other of the Heathen Poets, rapt, as it were, by a Divine Spirit, utter'd several Things like these. But lest the Reader should be tir'd with too much of them, I shall give a * Specimen, and a Taſt apart of them.

HITHERTO we have treated of the Jewish, the Heathen, and the Christian Religion. We have no Occasion to ſay any Thing concerning the Mahometan, when

* *Porphyrius* dwells much upon this Argument, *lib. 2.* *περὶ ἐποχ.* and thus towards the End determines. The moſt acceptable Sacrifice to the Gods, is the Offering of a pure Mind, and a Soul exempt from Paſſion, and free from thoſe Diſturbances that proceed from the Body. And it was as truly ſaid of him, that the moſt pious Sacrifice that we can offer to God, is a Life and Manners near reſembling, and nearly related to his own. But this Sacrifice is perform'd by a Mind contemplating God, and at the ſame Time entirely free from Paſſion. *Hierocles* handles the ſame Argument in the Beginning of his Comment upon the golden Verſes of *Pythagoras*, *viz.* God is not honour'd, by an expenſive Profuſion on the Things that are offer'd to him, unleſs they are offer'd by a Mind full of himſelf. For the Sacrifices and Offerings of Fools, are nothing but Food and Fuel to the Flames that conſume them, and their Gifts not better than ſacrilegious Riches. But a Divine Mind confirm'd and eſtabliſh'd in Virtue, unites and joins us to God. He alone is the worthy Sacrificer, who offering up himſelf as a Viſtim, and making his Soul the Divine Image, or the Seat of the Divinity, prepares and erects in his own Mind, a Temple the moſt worthy of the Divinity, and fitteſt for the Reception of the Light Divine. Tho' theſe are Things of ſome Length, yet as they are nearly, both in Senſe and Expreſſion, related to the Chriſtian Doctrine, I was willing to inrol them in it. *Marcus Antoninus* ſaid very juſtly, that God was not pleas'd in being flatter'd by rational Creatures, but in having them like to him.

when 'tis known to all, that there is no-
 thing excellent among the Followers of
Mahomet, (a voluptuous Impostor, who
 propagated his Religion by Arms,) un-
 less it be their Worship of one God, and
 their cultivating natural Justice. I say,
 they cultivate natural Justice, or teach
 that it ought to be cultivated, and would
 be thought to cultivate it. Their other
 Doctrines are borrow'd from the Jews
 and the *Epicureans*, with the frequent
 Intermixture of Tales absurd and sense-
 less. That they worship only one God,
 and reject and abhor all Heathen Rites,
 or Rites between Heathen and Christi-
 an, in this they are worthy of Praise.
 And whereas they believe both *Moses*
 and *Christ* to be true Prophets, and Pro-
 phets

him. And the Philosophers every where celebrate that Con-
 formity and Likeness to God, as the most exalted Height
 of Religion. This we find often in the foresaid *Hierocles*,
 in which he agrees with *Plato*. For he in his *Theatetus*,
 acquaints us, that then there will at last be an End of the
 Miseries of Mortals, when they take their Flight to the
 Gods, and make their Likeness their Sanctuary. By taking
 their Flight to the Gods, we mean, that as far as Human
 Nature is capable of it, we should become like unto God,
 and make our Souls his Images. But that which makes
 us like to the Deity, is Justice and Sanctity in Conjunction
 with Wisdom: With other Things of the like Nature,
 which follow here, and in several other Places in *Plato*.
 Lastly, The Philosophers mention Rewards and Punish-
 ments prepar'd for the Just and the Unjust, and affirm that
 Virtue is the only Way to true and eternal Happiness, and
 Vice to Infelicity. But enough of this at present.

phets sent from God, they must necessarily embrace one common Principle of Piety and Religion with them. Which we have shewn to be nothing but the innate eternal Distinctions between Good and Bad, between Vile and Worthy. With which some other Things of a middle Condition are interwoven, according to the Difference of Times, and Nations, and Climates: But always with this Design, that regard should chiefly be had to true Virtue and Piety, and their own Honours be paid to them, and that Men by Degrees should be exalted to supreme Perfection.

AND thus we have endeavour'd to shew in these short Remarks, that every Religion, be it what it will, or wherever it is establish'd, must have natural Religion, for its Basis and Original; that is, it must be founded on the preceding Notions of Righteous and Wicked, of Vile and Worthy, and a clear Distinction between them: And 'tis particularly manifest, that all reveal'd Religion must have this Foundation; for the Authority of every reveal'd Religion must depend partly upon the Quality and Goodness of the Subject Matter, and partly upon the Veracity of the Revealer, neither of which can possibly be prov'd without these preceding No-

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tions.

tions. 'Tis impossible for us to judge whether the Doctrine reveal'd be pure and holy, unless we have beforehand conceiv'd some Notion or Definition of Sanctity, as a Rule for the passing our Judgments on it: And if we enquire into the Integrity and the Veracity of the Revealer, that Question cannot be decided by his Word, or his bare Affirmation, while we doubt of his Authority, but by our preceding Knowledge of the Nature and the Perfections of God, from whom the Revelation is suppos'd to proceed.

To conclude, since these Things are so through every kind and Example of them, that remains fix'd and establish'd, which we at first affirmed, *viz.* that Natural Religion is the Foundation of every Religion that is introduced upon it.

C H A P. III.

Of the Jewish Religion more particularly; of its Authority, and its manifold Usefulness.

Hitherto we have enquir'd what is sound and truly holy in universal Religion. Our next Enquiry must be,

by what Right or for what lawful Cause Men went off from the Simplicity of natural and universal Religion, as we find that the Heathens, the Jews, and Christians have all of them gone off from it: But when we speak of the *Simplicity* of Natural Religion, we by no Means pretend to reject or exclude external Worship, provided it be chaste, and directed to that high God, who alone is sovereignly great, and supremely good: But when there is an Addition of so many Things, as well of various Rites and Ceremonies, as of dogmatical Tenets, which are not the natural Offspring of Reason, there is just Cause to enquire by what Authority, divine or human, or by what Power, whether lawful or usurp'd, these accessory Tenets are impos'd upon us, as necessary to the Salvation of Mankind.

As for what relates to the Pagan Religion, besides that it has no Pretence to divine Authority, unless some fictitious Communications, with unknown Gods and Goddesses, its Institutions are often either scandalous or impure, or frivolous, such as are becoming neither of Deities nor of upright and wise Men; so that they rather seem introduced to obscure the Glory of the most high and most holy God, and to abuse it in cor-

rupting the Manners of Men, under a Pretence of Religion, than to promote Justice and Piety: But these and all Institutions of this Nature, offend against the fundamental Law, which is always to be observed in the Ordination of Rites, and of all external Worship, and that is, that nothing be received in them that may diminish the Honour that we ought to pay to the most high God, or be contrary to good Manners: But how grievously the Heathen Religion offends against both these, we have already briefly shewn; and others have done it so largely, that there is no Occasion for wasting our Time by dwelling longer upon it in this Place.

WE come next to the Jewish Religion; very antient, and for its Antiquity venerable; and here, as in the others, we must enquire, first, by what Authority it was introduced and instituted: Then of what Ordinations and what Laws it consisted. Its Legislator was *Moses*, renown'd for being one of the greatest of Men, and celebrated by the greatest of Men, through all succeeding Ages: But now perhaps it will be enquired on what Authority did *Moses* depend, his own, or divine Authority; or by what Actions, what undeniable Testimonies,

Testimonies, was that Authority supported: My Answer is short: As *Moses* always spoke to the *Israelites* in the Name of the most high God, so he shew'd the Divinity of his Mission, or his Legation, by very many and most amazing Miracles: But the Cautious perhaps will reply to this, that indeed these Miracles, provided they are true, and truly divine, have all the Force that can be requir'd for the establishing the Authority, and the Law of *Moses*: But since those Conversations with God were private, and without any Witnesses, they are liable to be esteemed fictitious; and as for the Miracles which he perform'd publicly, it may as easily be answer'd, that *Moses* wrought them by those magick Arts, in which he is reported to have excelled. I must confess it has been usual with some Legislators to pretend a Communication with some Divinity, to secure Authority to their Laws, and prepare the Minds of Men to receive them with Reverence: But those Legislators perform'd no publick Miracles, by which they might influence those who beheld them to give Faith to their private Transactions. But *Moses* is known both to have wrought, and to have repeated at several Times divers most astonishing Miracles, not only in the

Deut.
xxxiv. 10,
11, 12.

the Court of *Pharaoh*, in the very Face of his *Egyptian* Adversaries, but afterwards before the whole People of *Israel*; and 'tis on this Account that he is preferr'd by sacred Story to all the rest of the Prophets, and is said to have outshin'd them all. *And there arose not a Prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew Face to Face. In all the Signs and Wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the Land of Egypt to Pharaoh, to his Servants, and to all his Land; and in all that mighty Hand, and in all the great Terror which Moses shew'd in the Sight of all Israel; but since he so openly, and before Thousands of Witnesses, had wrought so many Signs and Wonders, had perform'd so many mighty Miracles, there was not the least Room to doubt of his Veracity, when he declared that he was sent from God, and that he had received a Command to deliver Israel, from the very Mouth of God himself. I would fain know what private Man, unless he had greatly wanted Understanding, or rather had been raving mad, would have dar'd to have gone to a mighty King, in order to tear from out of his Power a whole People that had been many Years Captives to him: What private Men, I say, would have*
dar'd

dar'd to have done this, if he had not depended upon a Force and an Authority greatly above his own? *Moses* was not a Man of a fiery and rapid Imagination, but cautious and circumspect, and prudent in the Administration of all his Affairs; and unless he had been perfectly convinced, unless he had been most certain that the Command to undertake this great Deliverance had been given him by God himself, he would never have undertaken so dangerous a Task, at the utmost Hazard of his Life. Long did he resist, and shew'd great Reluctancy in receiving this Commission. His Behaviour was not only cautious, but timorous; he ask'd many Questions, and still he doubted; nay, he accused himself as unfit, and unequal to the Execution of so great a Design. Lastly, he made curious Enquiries after the Name, and after the Right and Power, of the God, as whose Delegate he was to act. After that he had satisfied all these Doubts, he goes into *Egypt*, where he declares his Delegation from the most high God, to deliver and govern the *Israelites*, declares it both to them and to *Pharaoh*, and confirms and ratifies it by many and great Miracles: First in *Egypt*, then in the Passage of the *Red Sea*, and lastly, at Mount *Sinai*, in the Wilderness

Exod. iii.

Wilderness through which the *Israelites* travelled, where he gave this Law of which we are treating, not without solemn and angelick Pomp, shaking and confounding both the Earth and the Heavens; but since these Things are so well known from the sacred History, to which no other is coeval, much less is any more antient, in which they are so beautifully related, there is no Occasion for entering into them more particularly here.

Mat. xii.
24. &c.

BUT you will attribute all this, perhaps, not to any divine Power, but either to magick Art, or the juggling Management of a subtle Impostor. What you now suspect of black and of magick Arts, was by the *Pharisees* objected to Christ, as if he had made use of the same Arts in the working his Miracles. But what was it that Christ answered to them? *Every Kingdom divided against itself is brought to Desolation, and every City or House divided against itself, shall not stand: And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his Kingdom stand?* The same Answer will serve in the Cause of *Moses*, because his chief Design was to extirpate and extinguish Idolatry, and the Works of Devils, not indeed universally thro' the World; for that was not to happen
till

till the Time of the Messiah; but among the People of *Israel*, where this was to be done, as it were the Offering of the first Fruits to God, and the setting an Example to the Nations: But 'tis not to be imagin'd, that by the Consent, or Design, or Assistance of malignant Spirits, these Wounds could be inflicted upon themselves, or that they should by themselves be deprived of their own Dominion. Besides, *Moses* had in *Egypt* proclaimed open War against the Magicians, and all their Forces, and had, as it were, in a pitch'd Battle, routed and overthrown them; so that there could be no Room for any Calumny of that kind, or for the least Suspicion, that *Moses* and the Magicians acted with the same Design, or that both of them used the Assistance and Power of the same Deity. Lastly, that an everlasting Monument of their Enmity and Discord might remain, *Moses* made a Law by which Magicians of every kind were to be punished by Death: *Moses* therefore was so far from having any Commerce with them, or any Assistance from their Art, that he had both them and their Art in the utmost Abhorrence and Detestation.

Exod. vii.
& viii.

Lev. xx.
27.
Deut. xviii.
10, 11, 12.

Thus far concerning the Person and the Authority of the Legislator; but perhaps you will find Fault with the Law

Law itself, with the Matter of the Law, and the Form of the Worship prescrib'd by it, and consequently with the whole *Mosaick* OEconomy, as if it were an Institution barbarous, heavy, dull, servile, and overladen with Trifles, almost wholly employ'd in external Washings and Lustrations, in distinguishing between Things that are clean and unclean, and in the Slaughter of Animals : You will say, perhaps, that it breaths forth nothing sublime, nothing cœlestial, and that it has not any View beyond this frail and transitory Life. Lastly, that it seems to be a Law unworthy of the supreme God, and unprofitable to the Souls of Men. I must confess, that *St. Paul*, who was a Jew of the strictest Sect of the Jews, bred at the Feet of *Gamaliel*, and most exquisitely instructed in the Forms of the Laws of his Country, speaks several hard Things concerning the Judaick Law. In the Epistle to the *Hebrews* he calls their Rites and Ordinances *carnal*, and in another Place *weak and beggarly Elements*; nay, Circumcision itself, the very Seal of the antient Covenant, he something harshly calls *Concision* : But I would have these Things understood, as said partly comparatively, with regard to the Christian Religion, and partly directed to those, who grossly

Heb. vii.

16. & ix.

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Gal. iv. 9.

Phil. iii. 2.

grossly and externally only consider'd the Mosaick Rites, the primary Design and Use of the Law being altogether neglected.

IN the mean while, that we may be able to pronounce an equitable Judgment concerning the *Mosaick* Law, many Things are to be weighed, and to be set forth each in its Order; and that is principally to be observed; which we declar'd above, *viz.* that this Law is built on the same Foundation with that of the best Laws, that is, on the Law of Nature, on the innate and eternal Principles and Reasonings of the human Soul, and those Duties which from the Nature of Things are due both to God and to Man. These *Moses* has briefly, yet clearly comprehended in the Decalogue, and has made all his Rituals and his secondary Points of the Law subordinate to these: Besides, we ought to observe, that *Moses* never had it in his Thought or Design to make a System of Laws, which should be absolutely perfect, but only one that should be most fit and most useful, with regard to the Place and the Time; nor did he design it to be the World's universal Law, but the Law of the Children of *Israel* only; nor, lastly, was it fram'd as a Law that was to endure for ever, but only to the Coming
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Mat. xvii.
3.

of the Messiah. If you weigh but all this with yourself, there will be no Occasion for any Apology or any Defence of ours: No, rather let us extol and admire so great a Man, the most prudent and profound Legislator, illustrious for Miracles of every kind, and the greatest of all the Prophets who were by God inspir'd; whom *Egypt* formerly beheld with Amazement, triumphing over its Diviners and its Magicians: *Egypt*, that was then the principal Seat of Learning, and of learned Men, whom every succeeding Age has celebrated; and lastly, whom Christ himself called down from Heaven, to be a Witness of his Glory: These will be thy Praises, O Prince of the Prophets! these will be the Monuments of thy Glory, while Heaven and Earth shall endure. In the mean while I shall, without any Reluctancy, run over the foresaid Heads, not with a Design to apolôgize for *Moses*, but to shew him deserving of all our Praise, and of all our Admiration.

I HAVE already said, that *Moses* never had any Design to constitute a Law that should in itself be most perfect, nor universal nor eternal; but a Law adapted to the Times in which he lived, and to the People whom he governed: And he took Care to dispose and pre-
pare

pare this People, whom he had brought off, and separated from the Commerce and Vices of the surrounding Nations, by this intermediate OEconomy, to embrace a more perfect Law, which was to be promulgated by the Messiah when he should be upon Earth. To compass this Design, when he saw Idolatry spread over the Face of the whole World, and knew it to be a Plague, and a mortal Infection to true Piety; and to Virtue, and pure Manners a most deadly Enemy; he believed it ought to be his chief Business to tear from off the Earth this universal Root of Evils; and therefore he declared, he taught, he commanded, that they should acknowledge but ONE GOD, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, and Him alone should worship: And he resolved that this Instruction, or this Precept, should be at the Head of his Laws, and should be the Basis of all the rest: And then he decreed that this one God should be worshipped under no Image nor Statue, as being invisible and incorporeal, and not to be represented by any Form or material Likeness whatever: Nor did he believe this sufficient; but that he might fortify these Precepts, he forbade the Use of all Statues and Images, not only with regard to Religion, but in
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their own private Houses, and in their publick Edifices, that so they might avoid all Temptations whatever, and the very Beginnings of Evils of this Kind: Then he made secundary Laws, concerning indifferent Things, that is, concerning Things that in their own Nature are neither vile nor worthy; which was done to this End, as the Learned know very well, that he might banish from among them the Customs and Manners of the neighbouring idolatrous Nations.

THUS far he provided, without any Stain, for the Performance of religious Rites, and the Adoration of the supreme Deity: And when he instituted the Worship of this one God, he religiously abstained from all those impure and bloody Ceremonies, which the Nations had mix'd with theirs: Nor was it a small Matter to have wiped off these Stains, and to have purged off this Foulness from their divine Worship. *To make even this Progress, is something:* To lay hold of a People with a saving Hand, and snatch them from sinking in the Filth and Defilement of the surrounding Nations; to make of them a separate chosen People, to instruct them to shake off their Vices, and to form and fashion them to all
worthy

worthy Decorum, both of Worship and Manners.

THESE Things being granted, what can you desire more? And 'tis undeniable, that most of the Institutions of *Moses* are immediately or remotely reducible to some of these Heads: But yet you will say that some Things remain which have no relation to them, and which have not the least Regard to Idolatry. I must confess there are some Things which are Types, or of figurative Institution, which are Shadows of the Messiah, and of the Things relating to him; and therefore they were of Use in reminding the Jews of the Coming of the Messiah, and for the recognizing him after he came. Lastly, there may perhaps be some other less important Precepts that are not reducible to any of these Classes, nor either their Rise, or Causes, or Usefulness be accounted for, which no Man of Sense can wonder at: For since so many Ages have past since *Moses* instituted his Laws, we are now ignorant what then was the State of Religious and Civil Affairs, either in *Egypt*, from whence the *Israelites* came, or among the People of *Canaan*, to which they were going, or in the surrounding Nations, or any other, from which Contagion might

come either to their Rites or Manners. I say, that when, in a very great measure, we are ignorant of these Things, either what Stop was to be put to the Encroachment of foreign Evils, or to the Diseases of the People what Remedies were to be applied, I do not at all wonder that the Grounds and Usefulness of some Precepts should be hid from our Sight: But it has been shewn by the Learned, by Records of Things which are still remaining, that as well the greatest as the minutest Precepts of the *Mosaic* Law, were occasionally produced by Things of the greatest Moment. And, that I may repeat the same Thing over again, you ought always to remember, that the Jews were neither Philosophers, nor that *Moses* inclin'd to force them from the Vale, to Virtue's Summit at once; but was inclin'd to raise them gently and gradually, agreeable to the Frailty of human Nature, and to the Designs of divine Providence. *

To conclude this Dissertation concerning the Jews, I desire we may recollect what has been hitherto said. We enquir'd

Vide Archæol. Philof. l. 2. c. 9, & 10.

* Κατὰ καιρὸν πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον ἕκαστα δίκονομα ὁ Θεός, τὴν ἀσθένειαν ἕκαστης γενεᾶς διορθούμενος, S. Chrysost. in Psal. cix. Deus singula, prout convenit tempori, regit & administrat ad usum & commodum, uniuscujusque generationis imbecillitatem dirigens.

enquir'd of what Advantage to Human-kind was the *Mosaick* Law; to what End was the Religion revealed to the Jews serviceable; what Necessity was there for that Dispensation, or what Utility rose from it: To which I answer, the Judaical Law was the first * Step to the Reformation of Mankind, and the first Instrument that was made use of to demolish Idolatry. Before the Promulgation of this Law, God had indeed preserv'd Natural Religion pure from Idolatry in some Families; but we no where read that it was before that establish'd through any Nation entirely. But when afterwards Idolatry was to be from the whole World exterminated, it seem'd good to Providence to proceed by these Degrees, first to establish and preserve the Worship of one God in some particular Family, then to proceed to one People entirely, and afterwards to many Nations.

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WHEN

* Καλὴ ἡ σελήνη ἀλλὰ κρείττων ὁ ἥλιος, ὥσπερ ἔν τῆς μὲν σελήνης καλῆς ὄσης, τῷ δὲ ἡλίῳ κρείττωνος, εἰς ἃ εἰν ὁ δημιουργός. ἢ τῷ καὶ παλαιᾷ καὶ καινῇ διαθήκῃ εἰς νομοθέτης, ὁ σοφὸς καὶ προσφύρων, καὶ κατὰ τὴν τοῖς καιροῖς νομοθετήσας, Isidor. Pelus. l. 2. Epist. 133. *Pulchra est Luna, & Sol praeclarior. Quemadmodum igitur & pulchra Luna & prestantioris Solis idem opifex est, eodem modo & veteris & novi Testamenti unus atque idem est Legislator, qui sapienter, & ad tempora accommodatè, modo hoc modo illud agendo, leges tulit.*

WHEN God first instituted the Judicial Law, all the Nations of the Earth were groaning under Idolatry; in some of which a lawless Barbarity reign'd, but in each of them an impure and idolatrous Worship; and to that Degree did this Impiety prevail, with every Sort of Wickedness, and Villany, the Attendants on it, that the World seem'd forced, and torn out of the Hands of God, and labouring under a certain Dæmonocracy, *viz.* under the Government of that malignant Spirit who set himself up for the Prince of this World, with a Design to administer human Affairs, as well sacred as civil, not to the Salvation, but the Destruction of Mankind.

WHILE Things were in this Condition, the Divine Providence at length shone out, and shew'd it self present and powerful, and resum'd the loosen'd Reins of the Universe, by a singular and extraordinary Method, and becoming of the most High God, who demanded and claim'd as his own, in the Name of *Jehovah*, by his Delegate *Moses*, a People the most despicable upon Earth; a People that had neither Law, nor Ruler, nor Country; a People, besides, in Captivity, and reduced to the lowest Slavery under the Tyranny of a mighty King. In short, he delivered this People out of the Hands
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of *Pharaoh*, the Name of the King who tyranniz'd over them, in Spite of all his Reluctancy, and that with a mighty Hand. He delivered them, I say, by the Force of repeated Miracles, and gave Law to this People thus delivered and redeem'd, and appropriated to himself: Not indeed, absolutely speaking, the best, and every Way the most perfect Law, but purg'd from the Idolatry of other Nations, and the best, and fittest for those Times and People. At the same Time, by this Means, he gave the first grievous Wound to the Idolatry of the Gentiles, and gave a Demonstration of his being Lord of Nature, and superior to all the Gods of the Nations of all the World.

BESIDES, the Revelation delivered to the Jews was of the greatest Moment, of the greatest Weight and Utility in opening the Doctrines of the Coming of the Messiah, and in preserving the same. A glimmering Light of the promised Messiah had appear'd before the Times of *Moses*, but in the Jewish OEconomy, besides the Addition of clearer Promises concerning the same Doctrine, the greater Part of the Worship it self either appear'd to allude to the State of the Messiah, or to give certain Marks and Signs of his Coming beforehand. The Prophets likewise, to the same Purpose di-

Vid. Maimon. Mor.
Nevoc.
par. 3. c.
32.

vinely inspir'd, were the Heralds, or Messengers, that were sent before him, to notify to the World his Coming, and foretold the Excellence and the Privileges of a new and diviner Dispensation; that the Souls and Senses of Men being thus prepar'd, the Doctrine of the Gospel might find an easier Admission. There was a Necessity of giving some Notice before hand, of so singular and wonderful an Event, an Event of so vast a Moment, as that of a God that was to be born among Men, of a Divine Person upon whose Shoulders the Empire of the World was to stand; lest the Newness of an Event, so singular, and so wonderful, and so much above their Conception, should oppress, and stupify Mankind. The Christian OEconomy, could scarce possibly be the first; the first in *Execution*, I mean; for it was certainly the first in *Intention*. Great Designs are never executed without due Preparation, nor can Mankind ascend to Perfection at once, but by Degrees and Discipline. When God was to introduce into the World his only-begotten Son, there was a Necessity for Premonition and Preparation, that he might be receiv'd by the Jews or the Gentiles. And therefore God was pleas'd to point out to us beforehand, both the Country and Genealogy of the Messiah that was to arise, and to

shew

shew us by several other Methods, both the Time and the Manner of his Nativity, and the Characters of his Person and Doctrine. But now if you recal to your Mind, that the whole Hinge of Providence, with respect to human Affairs, turns upon the Myſtery of the Meſſiah, from this Conſideration alone will appear, how much we owe to the *Hebrew* Records, and of what vaſt Importance they are.

BUT laſtly, In the Depth of the Divine Wiſdom, there were other Views that are hid from us, with Regard to the Grounds and Importance of that firſt Diſpenſation: One Thing is plain, that it was of very great Uſe in preſerving the Orders of Things, of Nations, and Times, even from the World's Original. In the moſt antient Heathen Records, every Thing is confus'd or corrupt, or maim'd; and in ordering our Studies, as well Sacred as Human, 'tis from this Revelation that we borrow Light and Aſſiſtance. In ſhort, it is, as it were, a Glaſs, by looking into which we may have a View of univerſal Providence, which it ſhews to be always one and the ſame; which govern'd antient Times, and governs the Modern: Always conſtant to it ſelf, embracing all Things, and holding, them as it were, by the Hand, link'd together in a ſtrong Chain, and ſubordinate one
to

to the other, whether they are Ante-Mo-
faical, or Judaical, or Christian. Up-
on all these Considerations, and others
that may occur to those who employ
their Thoughts about them, the Jewish
Dispensation will appear to be the Sup-
port and Bulwark of the Christian Re-
ligion. And now let us proceed direct-
ly to that, having sufficiently survey'd
the other.

C H A P. IV.

*Of the Christian Dispensation, compar'd
with the others; and of the Nature
and Author of it.*

HITHERTO we have taken a short
View, according to the End which
we propos'd to our selves, of the divers
Forms of Religion; first, of that of Na-
ture, as well the pure, as the impure;
and, secondly, of the first, which was di-
vinely instituted under *Moses*, the Pro-
phet and Legislator; we come now to
the Christian Law, or Religion, of all
that ever appear'd to the World, whe-
ther divinely or humanly instituted, in-
comparably the best and most excellent.
Because it is not only pure, and exempt
from

from any Defilement of Idolatry or Superstition, but freed from the Incumbrances of vain and superfluous Rites. For casting off the Impurity, the Errors and the Fables of the Gentiles, and rejecting that Load, and that Medley of Ceremonies, with which the Judaical Dispensation was over-run, it seem'd Good to Providence, in the Fulness of Time, to carry Mankind to a higher Perfection, as well by a clearer Knowledge of Things Divine, and of a Future State, as by a more intellectual Worship, and nobler Instructions for the forming our Lives and Manners. And therefore the Christian Religion does not only require all the Innocence and Decency of external Behaviour, but an entire Probity, an inward Sanctity, the Cleanness of the Heart, and the Renovation of the Soul to the Likeness and Participation of the Divine Nature. Lastly, it commands us to renounce, and fly from the Pleasures and Vanities of this World, and to condemn the Enjoyments of this Life, and even this Life it self, in Comparison of the Life, and the Enjoyments, which are to come. Thus far in general. But then it takes Care of all the Duties of Men in common Life, as well of Magistrates as of the People, as well of Superiors as of Inferiors. It every where
consults

consults the Publick Good, and commands us in our Dealings to observe a Fidelity above all Corruption. Besides, it inclines and composes the Minds of all to Peace; and persuades, and commands us to shew Benevolences, not only to our Friends, and our Neighbours, but to all Mankind, and to have Compassion and Mercy upon the Miserable. Lastly, it takes Care, that singularly, and universally, we should in Peace and Tranquillity, with all Piety and becoming Worthiness of Manners, pass over this Life, and in that to come enjoy Eternal Felicity.

IF this Christian Institution is compar'd with the Judaical Law, or with the Discipline of the Philosophers, it will appear, that it shews us the Way to true Piety, to Virtue, and to Happiness, more commodiously and effectually than the Philosophers, and more fully and perfectly than the Judaical Law. Christ fram'd his first Discourses, in the Sermon which he preach'd to the People on the Mount, for the enlarging and fulfilling the Jewish Law, in which he corrected many Things that had been corrupted by the unskilful, or the treacherous Interpreters of the Mosaick Law, and supplied something that either had been omitted, or less considered and enquir'd into. So that
by

by that Comparifon, he made known to the World, the Nature and Genius of both Laws, his own and the *Mofaick*, and principally taught us thefe two Points, That not fo much the external Acts of Virtue, or of Worfhip, as the internal Habits of the Mind, are acceptable to God, and the Seeds of Eternal Happinefs. And then he made univerfal Charity, a ready Will, and a warm Endeavour to do Good to our Fellow-Creatures, the firft Precept of his Law. And the fame Things are every where inculcated by the Apoftles, according to the Occafion. So that all the Hinges of the Chriftian Law, feem to turn upon thefe few Points, upon the Love of God, the Purity of Mind, and the Duties of Charity.

As for the Difcipline of the Philofophers, I cannot deny, but that they gave us, after their Manner, feveral Instructi-
ons and Precepts which are excellent : They fet up Reason as the Ruler of all the Motions of our Minds, and the Guide of our Lives and Manners. It was to Reason that they fubjected all our Paffions, our Appetites, and our Senses, to be refrain'd, and govern'd, and directed by her. But to give thefe Precepts, and thefe Instructi-
ons, the juft Force of a Law, there was wanting Authority, there
were

were wanting Miracles, and the certain Demonstration and Sanction of future Punishments. Besides, when these Instructions were only scatter'd here and there, in the Writings of the Learned, and *were warranted to be sound, and just, by the Authority of no Publick Stamp*, nor adapted to the Capacity of the Level of Mankind, they could be but little known to, and little prevalent with the common People, or the great Vulgar, of which the much greater Part of Mankind is constituted. But the Christian Law is so propos'd, and promulgated, that it comprehends all the Grounds, the Designs, and Purposes of useful and universal Law, and Law that is perfect in its Kind. It was instituted by the Fulness of Right Divine, as we shall immediately shew, had both oral and written Promulgation, and the Sanction of the greatest Rewards and Punishments; and is so compos'd, that it is easy to be understood by every one in all Things that are necessary.

LASTLY, 'tis observable, that our Legislator appointed an external OEconomy for the Preservation and Propagation of his Law; appointed sacred Rites, both of Initiation and Confirmation; and a solemn Order of Men, with Authority to teach it publickly and universally, and
to

to instruct in the Knowledge of it, both the Learned and the Ignorant. This was not in the Power of the Philosophers, nor was it ever attempted by them. The Master of every philosophical School constituted his own Sect, but supported it by no Authorities; nor did they so much handle religious Matters, as the Study of Sciences. The Gentiles also had their Priests, their Colleges of Priests, and their Pontifical Orders; but they were altogether employ'd in the ordering the Rites and Ceremonies of their Gods, and took no Manner of Care or Pains in the reforming Mens Lives and Manners.

THESE Things that were missing among the Philosophers, and among the Heathen Nations, were not so entirely wanting among the Jews. Their Law was not so much inferior to the Christian Law, by its Authority, as by the Dignity of its Matter. It abounded in Trifles, and unfruitful Ceremonies, and loading the Mind with Things external and corporeal, depress'd that Particle of Heavenly Fire, and fix'd it to the Ground. That Law did not consult Futurity, had no Manner of View of Eternity, and through the Darkness of its Shades, could not look up to Heaven. To these Evils of every Kind, our Legislator applied a Remedy;

Remedy ; and first, of all, correcting the sacred Worship, and reducing it to Purity and Simplicity, he afterwards prun'd off all Superfluities, and all superstitious Luxuriancies, from our Customs and Manners, and brought us nearer, in both Respects, to an unspotted Sanctity. Besides setting open Heaven to our ravish'd Eyes, and the Fountains of Eternal Life, he set our Souls on Fire with the Desire of Immortality, and brought us to condemn and scorn all earthly Enjoyments, by the View that he gave us of an everlasting Felicity.

THUS far concerning the Matter of the Christian Law, and the Manner of establishing it, compar'd with the other antient Laws of the Jews and Gentiles: But both those Adversaries still make further Enquiry, and entertain further Doubts, both concerning the Original of the Law and the Authority of the Legislator. For tho' the Divine Nature of this Law, declares its own Original, tho' it shines with unborrow'd Light, and carries its obligatory Force in it self; yet besides all this, these Adversaries require an external and visible Authority for the Introduction of a new Law: Things that have prevail'd for so many Ages, such was the Divine Will, are not rashly, nor lightly to be rejected. And here both

both Adversaries, the Jews and the Gentiles, rise against the new Legislator, and imperiously demand Reparation for the pretended Injury done to them, and their Laws. What would this Innovator have, they cry? We cannot imagine what Right he can have thus industriously to take upon him to alter both our antient Worship, and our antient Laws? As for our Worship, the Right of Prescription has been given to it by the Ruler of the World himself, either by tacit Consent and Permission, or by explicate Sanctions, confirm'd by Signs, and by Voices from Heaven. Nor can we part from either of them, without weighty Reasons, lest we should too justly be accus'd of Levity; and without Authority, equal or superior to that by which they were introduced. What say the Christians to all this? what Answer will they make to their Adversaries, who thus alledge in Defence of their Cause Antiquity, Possession, and antecedent Right? As for the Gentiles, they shall be dispatch'd in a few Words, because they never had a plenary and authentick Right; or if they had, they have lost it by their Abuse of it. As for the Jews, the Dispute with them will find us a little more Work: They certainly had that Right; but whether it has expir'd, or

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grown obsolete, is not of so short an Enquiry. But we shall discourse more fully of this Matter when we come to speak more at large of the Messiah, Prophet, and Prince, in common, both to the Jews and the Gentiles, and to examine their other Arguments. In the mean while, we shall make it appear, that Jesus of *Nazareth* was sent from Heaven, furnished with the Attestation of sacred Testimonies, and attended by Signs and Wonders, nay, more and greater than *Moses*, or any of the *Hebrew* Prophets, or any of the Sages among the Nations; which for the present shall be sufficient.

Luc. ii.

JESUS of *Nazareth* came into the World after a more than human Manner, born of an untouch'd Virgin, and without the Seed of a Man: An Original which it does not appear that ever any Mortal had before, and such as never could possibly be, without the Interposition of Virtue and Power divine. His Conception was attended with many Wonders: First an Angel appeared to the blessed Virgin, and declar'd to her, commanded by God, that she should conceive, and bring forth a Son, and that *Jesus* should be his Name: To whom when *Mary* wondering, answered, (for that was the Virgin's Name,) *How can this be, seeing I know not a Man?*

Man? The Angel said unto her, *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the Power of the Higbest shall overshadow thee; therefore, also that holy Thing that shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God:* And this, said the Angel shall be the Sign of a faithful Messenger, and one that comes from God: *Behold thy Cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a Son in her old Age:* And thus as *Isaac* was born of *Sarah* when she was old, *John the Baptist* was born of *Elizabeth*. Besides, an Angel appeared to *Joseph* in a Dream, to whom *Mary* was betroth'd; for *Joseph* finding her that was espous'd to him with Child, thought of putting her away: But the Angel said to him, *Joseph, thou Son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy Wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.* *Mary* at the same Time goes to *Elizabeth*, to have a Proof of the Angel's Veracity: And it came to pass, that when *Elizabeth* heard the Salutation of *Mary*, *Elizabeth* cried out with a loud Voice, *Blessed art thou among Women, and blessed is the Fruit of thy Womb: And whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me? For lo, as soon as the Voice of thy Salutation reached me, the Babe leaped*

in my Womb for Joy; and blessed is she which believed; for there shall be a Performance of those Things which were told her from the Lord. When the Blessed Mary heard this, she broke out in a holy Rapture of Joy, and pour'd forth her Soul before the Lord, in these Praises in this sacred Hymn: My Soul doth magnify the Lord, and my Spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour; for he hath regarded the low Estate of his Hand-Maiden; for behold from henceforth all Generations shall call me Blessed: for he that is mighty hath done to me great Things, and holy is his Name: And his Mercy is on them that fear him from Generation to Generation: He hath shewed Strength with his Arm; he hath scattered the Proud in the Imagination of their Hearts: He hath put down the Mighty from their Seat, and exalted them of low Degree: He hath filled the Hungry with good Things, and the Rich he hath sent empty away: He hath holpen his Servant Israel, in Remembrance of his Mercy, as he spake to our Fathers, to Abraham, and his Seed for ever. Thus the pious Mothers of John and Jesus, excited and inspir'd by a divine Rapture, celebrated the Praises of God. Lastly, Zecharias the Priest, who for some Time had lost the Use of his Speech,

Speech, *John* being now born, and the Birth of *Jesus* expected, all at once recovered his Voice, and utter'd a celebrated Prophecy concerning both.

ALL this have we said concerning the Conception of *Jesus* of *Nazareth*: Many more Observations are to be made concerning his Birth. As soon as *Jesus* Luc. ii. was born in *Bethlehem*, an Angel in a glorious Shape appear'd to Shepherds, who kept Watch by Night in the neighbouring Fields for the Security of their Flocks, who, after he had comforted and recovered them from the Fear with which they were struck, said to them, *Behold I bring you Tidings of great Joy, which shall be to all People; for unto you is born this Day, in the City of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord: And this shall be a Sign unto you: Ye shall find the Babe wrapp'd in Swadling Clothes, lying in a Manger; and suddenly there was with the Angel a Multitude of the heavenly Host, praising God, and saying, GLORY be to God in the Highest, and on Earth Peace, Good-will towards Men.* Was ever any Nativity before celebrated by a glorious Congregation of Angels? Was ever any of the great Lords or great Sages of the World, the *Cæsars*, or Philosophers, or Prophets, or Legislators, honour'd in so glorious a Manner? Angels,

Job.
xxxviii. 7.

in the Beginning of Time, celebrated the World's Nativity, when the Morning Stars sung together, and all the Sons of God shouted for Joy: And now the same Angelick Chorus returns to celebrate the Birth of the World's Redeemer. They sing triumphing to their celestial Harps, and with harmonious Acclamations proclaim the King of Glory; *Glory* be to God in the highest, on Earth be Peace and Good-will towards Men. The Heavens resounded, and with a thousand repeated melodious Sounds the Host of Heaven again and again redoubled, *Glory, Glory, Peace and Glory*. But let us return to the Shepherds: They, by the Angels thus instructed, went directly to *Bethlehem*, and as it was foretold them, beheld the Child that was newly born lying in the Manger; which confirm'd them in the Truth of the Angelick Message: Which Things when they had seen, the Fame of them far and near was spread; by Witnesses who had seen them, reporting both the Angelick Vision, and the Child whom they had beheld. At which, as some were struck with Admiration, so the blessed Virgin kept all these Things, and ponder'd them in her Heart.

SCARCE were these Things transacted and over, when behold, we are alarm'd by a new Sign from Heaven, a Sign not given to Shepherds, Persons of great Simplicity, both of Faith and Manners, but to some of the Eastern Sages, whom they call the *Magi*; who being admonish'd by a new Star from Heaven, came to *Jerusalem* from afar, as 'tis believed, from *Arabia*, to pay their Adorations to this Infant. From *Jerusalem* they go to *Bethlehem*, directed in their Way by the same Star, which stopp'd and hung over the House where the Child was: And when they were come into the House, they saw the young Child, with *Mary* his Mother, and fell down and worshipped him; and when they had open'd their Treasures, they presented unto him Gifts, Gold, and Frankincense, and Myrrhe. But as *Herod* had laid his Commands upon these *Magi*, that as soon as they had found the Child which they sought, they should return to *Jerusalem*, and impart what they knew and had seen to him, that he might likewise go and adore the new-born King; for that was the Pretence by which he covered his Fraud: God, who knew the treacherous Heart, and the deceitful Malice of *Herod*, in a Dream admonish'd the *Magi* to avoid *Jerusalem*,
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and return into their Country by another Way.

Luc. ii.

THUS much concerning the Shepherds and the Magi, Witnesses of a different Order; the Shepherds too simple to deceive, the Magi too knowing to be deceived. To these was added a Testimony of a different kind, of *Simeon* and *Anna* prophesying, and that upon this Occasion. When the Days of the Purification of *Mary* were over, they brought the young Child to *Jerusalem*, to present him to the Lord, with the usual Offerings, according to the Law of *Moses*; and while he was in the Temple with his Mother, *Simeon*, a just and devout Man, to whom it had been revealed by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see Death before he had seen the Lord's Christ: This Man saw the Child Jesus, and took him up in his Arms, gave Praise to the Lord, and cried, *Lord, now lettest thou thy Servant depart in Peace, according to thy Word: For my Eyes have seen thy Salvation, which thou hast prepared before the Face of all People, to be a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the Glory of thy People Israel.* Thus said *Simeon*. At the same Time the Prophetess *Anna* coming in by divine Impulse, as soon as she saw the Child, gave Thanks likewise to
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the Lord, and spake of him to all those that looked for Redemption in *Jerusalem*.

HITHERTO we have seen the Child *Jesus*, upon the Point of his Nativity, or newly and actually born, and accompanied by Signs from a Power above Nature. When he was grown up to Virility, and was about to enter upon his sacred Ministry, of *John the Baptist* he received Baptism. The Baptist at first refused him, saying, *I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?* Mat. iii. By which Testimony *John* acknowledged *Jesus* to be greater than himself, superior to him in sacred Matters, and of diviner Excellence: And *Jesus*, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the Water: And lo, the Heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a Dove, and lighting upon him: And lo, a Voice from Heaven, saying, **THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, IN WHOM I AM** Mat. ibid.
Joh. i. **WELL PLEASED.**

AND thus you see from Heaven a most illustrious Testimony, the like to which God never vouchsafed to *Moses*, or any of the Prophets.

AND thus you see all Things meet and concur, that are able to shew forth a Man divine, a Man to God most acceptable,

ceptable, whether you regard him as a Prophet, a Priest, or a Legislator. He is in every Kind, and in every Manner consecrated to God, and accomplished for the Execution of his sacred Office. He received as well the Baptism of Water as that of the Spirit, as well the Cleansing by the former, as Unction by the latter, or the Antitype of Unction the Effusion of the Holy Spirit, and its staying and dwelling with him. Lastly, in the Exercise of his sacred Ministry, God vouchsafed him the same Honour, and gave him the same Testimony, when in the sacred Mountain a bright Cloud overshadowed him and his Disciples, and this Voice was sent out of the Cloud: *This is that Son of mine; this is that Beloved, in whom I am well pleased, HEAR YE HIM.*

Mat. xvii.

AND shall we not hear this Interpreter of God? this celestial Legislator, whom God commands us to hear? before whom so many Ensigns of singular Authority are born. Did ever Man come into the World with such a Pomp of divine Wonders as did Jesus of *Nazareth*? who, born of a Virgin without a human Father, had Angels for the Heralds of his Nativity, and of his future Glory? I forbear, for the present, to mention his antient Heralds,

I mean the Prophets, concerning whose Predictions, since they chiefly relate to the Jews, there will be a fitter Opportunity of discoursing hereafter. In the mean Time, what was wanting to him, to signify his Authority, as a Legislator or as a Prophet, before he enter'd on his Ministry? There were Angelical Heralds, divine Visions, Voices from Heaven, and prophetical Inspirations. In short, he first made his publick Appearance propp'd and supported by every Way, and by every Manner, by which the Will of God is wont to be open'd, and Power divine is wont to be delegated.

THESE Witnesses have we, and these, as it were, Securities for Jesus of *Nazareth*, Prophet and divine Legislator: These were the Acts and the Præ-admonitions of Heaven: We are next to consider what he himself did for the Establishment of his own Authority, after he enter'd upon his publick Ministry; and on this Occasion we can enumerate the Miracles which he wrought himself, as well living as dying; Miracles more illustrious than any that we have hitherto mentioned: And then his Resurrection and his Ascension; and lastly, the Things that follow'd, as well in the Beginning, as in the Progress of the Religion which he introduced and instituted.

CHRIST

CHRIST wrought many and various Miracles, the greatest that ever yet have been wrought, and confirm'd by the strongest Evidence, and the most numerous Witnesses. He heal'd the Sick, the Lame, the Blind, and the Dumb, and performed these Wonders as well absent as present, sometimes by his Voice, sometimes by his Hand, and sometimes by the only Touch of his Garment: Nature, and the Elements obey'd his Commands; the Winds, the Air, the Water, and the great Deep; and by his Commands he turned them into whatever State, into whatever Form he pleased. Nor did he exercise Dominion only over human or natural Bodies, but also over Devils and Spirits impure, nay, over the very Dead: The Dead he called to Life, and the Devils he cast out of the Bodies of the Living. Whenever he pleas'd, he summoned the Angels as so many Servants to obey his Commands, that he might convince the World that he had received a Commission to command all Nature: And lastly, as he did over all Things else, he exercis'd a Power over his own Body, in which he never had any Precedent, and after which he never will have any Imitator. He chang'd it into a bright and a glorious Body, and then reduced

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it to its pristine State. I speak of his *Transfiguration*, when in the sacred Mountain, *his Face did shine as the Sun; and his Raiment was white as the Light.* *Moses* also, and *Elias*, were talking with him, one the most celebrated among their Prophets, and the other their renowned Legislator; and when they departed from him, a Voice was heard from out of the Clouds, commanding us to hear and obey the beloved Son of God. Mat. xvii.

THESE Things we have spoke briefly concerning the Miracles of Christ, which would be alone sufficient to convince the World of his divine Authority, tho' no extraordinary Signs had shone, either before his Birth, or had follow'd immediately after it: But he not only upon this last Account surpass'd all the Prophets and Legislators that ever appear'd in the World, but likewise by the Miracles which he himself perform'd; for those which we read of scattered up and down in the antient sacred History, some of them perform'd by one Prophet, and some of them by another, Christ has collectively performed them all, or greater than them all.

To the Miracles of Christ may be added his Prophecies, that we may demonstrate him a Prophet both by his Words

Words and Actions: And that which offers itself first to our Thoughts, is the memorable Prediction of the **DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM**, which he utter'd with Tears. He saw the approaching Calamity of his antient People, and of his beloved City; and he often gave that perverse Generation Warning of the future Wrath of their offended God, and of his impending Vengeance. The Event was answerable to the Prediction: The miserable City perished with its Inhabitants; and still the Desolation of both remains a dismal Monument of the Prophet's Veracity.

Chap. ii.

NOR did he only foretel calamitous Events, and the Judgments of God hanging over the Heads of his Enemies, but promised and predicted Benefits and Gifts to his Disciples. I speak of the Mission and the Effusion of the Holy Ghost on their Souls. We find that this Prophecy and this Promise were accomplished in the *Acts of the Apostles*, after a most extraordinary Manner, and unknown to preceding Ages; of which both Jews and Gentiles were Witnesses. Immediately after the Ascension of Christ, when his Disciples were gathered together at *Jerusalem*, the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles, in a visible Manner, and in a fiery Form, the Effects

fects of which were wonderful. Those ignorant Fishermen, and Men of the Lees of the People from *Galilee*, inspir'd from Heaven, talk'd on a sudden with one another in various Languages, unknown to them before, and as readily as if they had been render'd perfect in them by long Study and Practice. But a Rumour being spread throughout the City, of this new and unusual Event, many Strangers of those several Nations that were then at *Jerusalem*, met together at the same Place, that they might know by Experience the Truth of the Fact, and the Faithfulness of the Report. And when they found that the Thing was true, and plac'd beyond all Doubt, they were wonderfully astonish'd, while every Man heard his own native Tongue pronounc'd by the Mouths of the Apostles. Nor did this Inspiration, and this Gift, pass like a Flash of Lightning, and had only a transitory Influence, but was present to the Apostles, even to their Deaths, as often as Occasion requir'd. Nor did these Gifts of the Holy Spirit, with several others, accompany only the Apostles, but all that were initiated in the Christian Faith and Discipline.

1 Cor. xii.
10, 26, 30.
& xiv. 2.

To pass by several other Things, he often foretold both his Death, and his Resurrection, to his Apostles, and *Mat.*

x. 16.

x. 16. *Ec.* *Mark* xiii. 9. *John* xxi. 18. what they were to suffer after his Departure and Death. Then he foretold St. *Peter's* Denial of him, and that one of the Twelve should betray him, whom he mark'd by the Delivery of a Morfel of Bread to him. Then he foretold the Obstinacy, and the Rejection of the Jews, and the future Conversion of the Gentiles, *Mat.* viii. 11. and xxi. 43. *John* x. 16. But what need I say any more? *Jesus* of *Nazareth* was often acknowledg'd to be a Prophet, and that Prophet that was to come, even by the Jews themselves, who were sometimes astonish'd at his Heavenly Doctrine, and sometimes at his wonderful Deeds, and convinced and confounded by the Voice of their own Oracles, *Mat.* xxi. 11. *Luc.* vii. 16. *Ec.* and xxiv. 19. *John* iv. 19. *Ec.* and vii. 40. *Ec.* and xix. 17. Then *John* i. 45. *Ec.* and vi. 14.

BUT let us proceed to the History of the Death, the Resurrection, and the Ascension of Christ. First, When he was about to die; and in that Article of Death, both Heaven and Earth gave open Signs of their Indignation and Horror: The Earth trembled, and the Face of the Sun was darken'd: The Sepulchres of the Dead flew open, the Rocks were rent, and the Veil of the Temple was torn asunder

funder, that the Wrath of God, and impending Vengeance over the Heads of the Doers of this accursed Deed, might be known to all, both to the Jews, and to the Gentiles, both to the Living, and to the Dead. And all this was so manifest, and so conspicuous, that they who assisted at this Villany, or at this villanous Murder, or who were otherwise present at it, *viz.* the Centurion, and the surrounding Crowd, astonish'd at these wonderful Prodigies, cry'd out, that *a just Person, and the Son of God, was delivered to an infamous Death.*

THE Death of Christ was follow'd by his Resurrection, and his Victory over Death itself. For when *Jesus* was crucified by the Jews, was dead, and was buried, a military Watch being plac'd at the Sepulchre, because he had said, that in three Days, he should rise from the Dead, within three Days, he actually rose again, Angels being present at, and attesting his Resurrection. After which he shew'd himself at several Times alive, to his anxious or doubting Disciples. Thus did Christ shew himself exalted above the Condition of a Mortal, exalted above Death it self, having broke in Pieces all his Bars, and torn all his Bands asunder, which he did by his own Power, by which at the last Day he will raise up us from the Dead likewise.

John x. 18.
Phil. iii.
20. 21.

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AND now, what need I say more? What Occasion is there to mention still greater Indications of a Divine Virtue? yet still the highest Accomplishment is wanting to all these. After that Christ had conquer'd Death by this Resurrection, he obtain'd a glorious Triumph over it by his Ascension, when upon the Mount of *Olives*, Angels bearing Witness to it, and the Apostles being Spectators, he shook off all Mortality: Forsaking the Earth, he flew up to the highest Heavens. And thus he return'd to his Father, and to the Fruition of that

John xvii.
5.

Glory, which he enjoy'd before the Foundation of the World. Such a Resurrection, and such an Apotheosis, never any Mortal had since, nor in the preceding Ages.

ALL this have we said of *Jesus of Nazareth*, of his Life, and his Death, his Resurrection, and his Ascension. And these seem to me to be the greatest, and most irrefutable Proofs of his Divine Authority, *viz.* the Miracles wrought by the Legislator, and the Sanctity of his Law, the fulfilling Accomplishment both of preceding Prophecies, and of those which were then to come, Voices from Heaven, the Apparitions of Angels, and their Testimonies. Why are ye not taught by these Signs, says Christ, to

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discern what is Just, or agreeable to Reason. But perhaps you will ask what was the Consequence of all this? What Credit did the World give to these Actions and Sayings? How far did these glorious, these wonderful Things, prevail over the Men of that Age, or the succeeding Ages, while the Fame, and the History of these Things, was still fresh in their Memories? Lastly, What Force, what Success, had this new Law, of which Christ was the Author? We have partly made mention of it already, when we said, that upon the first Preaching of the Apostles, and their giving an Account of the Death, and the Resurrection of Christ, and the Prophecies that relate to them, near three thousand Souls were converted to the Faith of Christ. Nor upon the continued Preaching of the Apostles, did the Faith of Christ make a less Progress, or a less Increase, till at length it subdued the whole *Roman Empire*, and extended it self wherever the Christian World extends. Oracles, and the Worship of Devils ceas'd. *From the Time*, says Por-
phyrius, that Jesus began to be wor-
shipp'd, no one was sensible of any com-
mon Assistance that came publickly from
the Gods. But now, let us ask in our
 Turn, from whence came this sudden
 Change,

Euseb.
 præp. E-
 vang. l. 5.
 c. 1.

Change, this new Appearance of Things? From whence this Victory? The Contention was not by Force of Arms, nor by Human Arts and Eloquence. The first Preachers of the Gospel are known, to have been vulgar Men, and Men of low Estate. Nor were they in Possession of Riches themselves, nor did they make any Promise of them to others; nor of Honours, nor of any of the other Incentives of Human Desires. Nay, so far were the first Worshippers, or the succeeding Profelytes, from believing that they shou'd have the Enjoyment of any of these, that they saw that all who embraced this Religion, were expos'd to the Hatred, and the Contempt of the World. Nor only that; but saw them thrown into Prisons, to be torn in Pieces by wild Beasts, or destroy'd by Sword and by Fire. Yet notwithstanding all this, the Gospel prevail'd, and the Number of those who were converted to the Christian Faith, was continually augmented. By what Power, I would fain know from you, by Divine or Human Power? All Human Power was against it. Can you deny then that the Hand of a God was in all this? of a God most High and most Mighty? The Event most certainly requires, and demonstrates no less a Power; and the numerous

rous Miracles that interven'd, shew'd that a God was present, and propitious to these Beginnings.

Who can desire more numerous, or stronger Proofs, that he ought to believe in this Legislator, as in one sent from Heaven. When besides the eminent Dignity of the Law itself, so many, and so mighty Miracles attended it, as well in order to introduce it, as to establish it, one Thing only remains, and that is, that we take a View of the State of Human Affairs, at the Time when our Saviour came into the World, by which the Influence, the Advantage, and the Necessity of this new Dispensation, under the Messiah may, if 'tis possible, still more plainly appear: That it may appear, how opportunely that Prince of Peace, and of Justice, came to the Deliverance of the wretched Race of Men: From what an Abyss of Misery he drew them, and lastly, with what Warmth, with what Excess of Goodness, he provided for their future Salvation and Felicity.

'Tis no easy Matter to set a Picture before your Eyes, of the World, which at that Time, was in its greatest Deformity and Degeneracy, and lay sunk in the Darkness of Vice, and of Superstition. The Jewish Religion, which at first was given as a Remedy for the Ills of others,

had now fallen into a dangerous Distemper itself: For the Jews, neglecting the fundamental Part of the Law, that Part which it deriv'd from the Law of Nature, adher'd too strictly to their Rites and Ceremonies; and believ'd that if these were carefully perform'd, they should be acceptable to God, and more Religious than all other People. But this solicitous Care about external Trifles, and the Neglect of internal Things of the greatest Moment, is the very Moth that corrupts, and consumes all True Religion. Besides Idolatry, that Plague, that infected the Race of Men, reign'd every where out of *Judea*. The Heathens ador'd as many Gods as there were neighbouring Stars in the Heavens. Nor did they only adore the Heavens, and the Stars of Heaven, but Men that were dead, and Animals, and Plants, as we said before. As they had every where many Gods, they had no where one; and they worshipp'd the Deities, or Idols, which they ador'd, not only with frivolous, but with impure, nay, with savage and barbarous Rites. And from this Root of Idolatry and Superstition innumerable Vices sprung up: An unbridled Lust, and a Luxury and Impurity in their Manners, and at the same Time an Impunity, even when they

they satisfied those execrable Passions which were against Nature; nor did their Rage against one another shew itself less in every kind of Injustice, in mutual Injuries, and a brutal Ferocity. Many of them lived upon the Prey which they got by Robbery, without any Manner of Government. Others, who were in Possession of Imperial Power, became cruel Tyrants to the People, whom they each of them govern'd; and they forced the Foreigners, whom they had overcome, and made Captives in War, to fight and destroy one another, like so many Beasts, or to encounter wild Beasts for a Diversion to the People, and a pleasing Spectacle: Nor did they at the same Time so much consult the Interest of Society, or the publick Good, as how every one might obtain what most he coveted, let it be what it would: One sacrificed every Thing to his Ambition, others to their Avarice, and others to the other Furies of the Soul, without mutual Love, without Charity, or Mercy upon the Miserable. To say all in a Word, they were hurried on with a blind Impetuosity to gratify their Lusts both of Body and Mind, without Law or Rule for the present Life, without Hope or Fear, for the Life which was to come.

THUS the Heathen World seemed to have thrown off Humanity, and to have degenerated into Brutes: Nor was this all; but they over and above abandon'd themselves to the Tyranny of evil Spirits, who, by the divine Permission, had obtain'd the Empire of this World: For that the Prince of those evil Powers arrogated to himself, when shewing all the Kingdoms of this World, and the Glory of them to Christ, he

Luke iv. 6. said to him, *All this Power will I give thee, and the Glory of these Kingdoms; for that is deliver'd unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it.* We know indeed that the Devil is not to be depended upon for Truth; but Christ no less pronounced him the Prince of this World, and often called him so, *Joh. xii. 31. and xiv. 30. and xvi. 11.* He seemed indeed at that Time to possess the World, by all Manner of Right and Title, which, God being as it were depos'd, seemed to be arbitrarily govern'd by Devils. They establish'd their Oracles in several Regions, and inspir'd, or rather possessed with a Diabolick Fury, their Prophetesses and their Priests. They likewise appointed various Kinds of Divinations, vain and foolish, with design to delude and mock the Race of Men, and even God himself; Augurs, Haruspices,

Haruspices, and Diviners of several Sorts were instituted, who, by inspecting the Entrails of Beasts, by observing the Flight of Birds, by the Neighing of Horses, and by the Lightning and the Thunder, pretended to discover the Secrets of Heaven, and the future Events that were to happen to Men. Others they instructed in Magick Arts, and by that Means held them in a slavish Subjection to them, as it were, by League and Compact. In this Sink of Vice and of Superstition, did the Race of Men lie wallowing; and what the Prophet formerly said of the People of *Israel*, he might with the same Truth have said of the rest of Men: *Ab! Sinful Nation, a People laden with Iniquity, a Seed of Evil-Doers, Children that are Corruptors; they have forsaken the Lord; they have provoked the holy One of Israel: The whole Head is sick, and the whole Heart faint: From the Sole of the Foot, even unto the Head, there is no Soundness, but Wounds and Bruises, and putrifying Sores.* Hear, O Heaven! and give Ear, O Earth! what hath this People deserved?

Isa. i.
Rom. ii.

WHEN God was angry with the antediluvian Race of Men, who had utterly degenerated and deviated from the Ways of Virtue, he destroy'd all Flesh from the

Isa. xv.

the Face of the Earth, excepting one only Family, which he preserved, that he might make a Tryal by that Branch, whether Mankind, forewarned and terrified by so vast a Destruction, would make a Return to Goodness: But neither the Wrath of God, nor the universal Deluge, were of any Advantage to the Reformation of Mankind, which soon fell back to its old Impiety, its Impurity, and its Immorality, and, as the World grew older, became more profligately vile: *But why will ye be stricken any more; you will revolt still more and more*, says the Prophet? And therefore God did not destroy, nor extinguish this second Race of Men, but mov'd with Compassion, endeavour'd to reclaim them from their Crimes and their Errors, by sending his only-begotten Son upon Earth; with a new Law and a new Dispensation, with Intention, if it were possible, to reform the World: But by what Method God design'd this Reformation of Mankind, and in what Manner Christ went about it, we have mentioned in general up and down in our former Chapters: But we shall explain them more fully in those which are to follow, after we have now said what was requisite concerning the Authority

riety of the Legislator, and the Usefulness and Necessity of his Law.

CHAP. V.

Of the Worship of God; and of sacred Rites according to the Christian Law.

CHRIST came into this World that ^{1 Joh. iii. 8.} he might destroy the *Works of the Devil*, such as Vices, Errors, Idolatry. ^{Mat. xii. 29.} Entangled in these, and alienated from ^{Luke. x. 18.} Truth, from Virtue, and true Piety, ^{Joh. xii. 31. & xiv. 11.} the Prince of this World kept human ^{Joh. viii. 44. & 1 Joh. v. 19.} Souls in his Power. What Succour did Christ bring to them? What were the Medicines which he prescribed for the Cure of these Distempers? He provided Remedies which appear to me to be proper, and adapted to each of them, and which rightly applied are no less effectual in the Cure of them. Against Idolatry and Superstition he provided Purity of Worship: Against the Vices of the Soul, a just and equitable Rule for the Manners, and a pure and unblemish'd Example for them; and he provided against Errors the Light of Truth, and a Right Belief. Let us now enquire into

into the Truth of this, and whether any Thing else is wanting.

WE are to begin with God, the Creator of all Things, and the Ruler of the Universe. The Doctrine of Christ was, that God was one, eternal, incorporeal, infinite, unchangeable, and most holy: By this one Stroke he overthrew the innumerable, but empty and imaginary Gods of the Nations, and abolish'd their unsound Worship: I say, the Gods of the Nations; for he every where appointed the God of *Israel* to be ador'd, but said, that they ought to alter the Worship which they paid to him. *God is a Spirit*, says Christ, *and they who worship him, must worship him in Spirit and in Truth*: By which Saying he shew'd, that he disapproved of the Worship both of the Jews and the Gentiles. A pure Spirit neither ought nor can be represented either by Statues or Images. These, and the like fictitious Works of Mens Hands, detract from the Dignity of the Deity, and depress his transcendent Nature to the Likeness of Things that are vile and corporeal: Besides, the Heathens polluted the Sanctity of the Deity by Rites that were frantick, vile, or abominable, (as we have already said more than once,) which our Legislator had in Abhorrence: Nor did he design by
this

Joh. iv.
23, 24.

this Admonition to reprimand the Gentiles only, but also the Jews, who indeed worshipped one incorporeal God, but with too corporeal a Worship; a Worship confin'd to some certain Places, and loaded with external and useleſs Ceremonies. Theſe are admoniſh'd by him to change and dilate the Worship of God: That God is not only preſent at *Jeruſalem*, or in Mount *Jerizim*, or in this or in that Temple only; that the whole Extent of Earth is his Seat, and all the vaſt Compaſs of Heaven, and that he is preſent to thoſe who worſhip him in Spirit and Truth in every Place, and in every Nation.

THEIR Prophets often gave the Jews the ſame Admonition; and not only the Prophets, but Philoſophers, guided by the Light of Nature, admoniſhed Men in every Age, that the Deity was every where preſent to pious Souls, and was not to be appeas'd with external Ceremonies, or with vain Oblations, as we ſee in *Plato*, in *Hierocles*, and in others. And that Saying of *Seneca*, L. 6. c. 25. which we find in *Lactantius*, egregiouſly ſhews forth the ſame Thing. *Are ye willing to look upon God as a great and benign Being, as one to be rever'd for his mild and gentle Maſteſty, and as a Friend that is always at hand to help thoſe whom he loves? then believe that he*

Isa. lxvi.

1, 2, 3.

Acts vii.

48, 49.

he is not to be worshipped by Sacrifices and Blood, (for what Pleasure can he receive from the Slaughter of innocent Creatures?) but with a pure Mind, and good and worthy Thoughts, and Designs. He requires no Temples of Stones in pompous Heaps, to be built to him, but every Man ought to consecrate his own Breast to him. In the same Manner the Prophet *Isaiah* spoke from the Mouth of God: Thus saith the Lord, *The Heaven is my Throne, and the Earth is my Foot-Stool; where is the House that ye build unto me? and where is the Place of my Rest? For all these Things hath mine Hand made. --- But to this Man will I look; even to him that is poor, and of a contrite Spirit, and that trembleth at my Word. He that killeth an Ox, is as if he slew a Man: He that sacrificeth a Lamb, is as if he cut off a Dog's Neck: He that offereth an Oblation, as if he offered Swine's Blood: He that burneth Incense, as if he blessed an Idol.* Thus you see the Worship both of the Jews and the Gentiles is condemned, and, as it were, laughed at, both by God and by Men, and both by Men divinely inspir'd, and by Philosophers. But let us return to the Discourse of Christ.

CHRIST

CHRIST has told us in the foregoing Words. *The Hour cometh, and now is, when the true Worshipers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him.* God is to be ador'd, says he, in *Spirit*, not with external Actions only, nor with a corporeal Worship, nor with Rites and Ceremonies, which never purify the Soul, but with inward Piety, with a sincere Affection of the Heart, with a chaste, a pure, and holy Spirit, as he is a Spirit most holy. And then he teaches us that he is to be worshipped in *Truth*, no longer with Types and Shadows, and Figures, much less with a superstitious, a false, or hypocritical Worship. The Whole of the Matter is, Christ teacheth us to adapt our Worship to the Dignity and Nature of that Deity whom we worship. Now that Deity is invisible, omnipresent, omniscient, who sees through our Hearts and our inmost Thoughts; the common Father of all, and the Creator of the Universe: *This, O Christian, is thy God*; not as the *Israelites* said of old, *These are thy Gods*, O Israel, when they beheld the Golden Calves, which they had newly made; nor like the Heathens, whose Gods lie hid in Brasses, in Stocks, or in Stones. The Christians God is as bound-

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less in his Presence, as he is in his Goodness: And is present to every one in every Climate, and in every Nation; ACTS x. 35. *to him who feareth him, and who worketh Righteousness*; who in the Mind of the good Man hath his most delightful Seat, and his most venerable Temple.

To make an End in a few Words; Christ in the foregoing Verse set before us, first, the Object of divine Worship; and secondly, a Worship answerable to that Object, and truly-worthy of God, by which I mean an *universal* and *rational* Worship; such as are Praise, and the Returning of Thanks, and Prayers and Supplications pour'd forth from a warm Heart. It was his Will that we should consecrate ourselves, both our Bodies and our Souls to God, and not offer up the brutal and cruel Sacrifices, the Blood of Bulls and of Goats, which are neither agreeable to God in their Nature, nor do such Oblations render the Soul of the Sacrificer in the least more holy.

THE Rites of the Jews and Gentiles being thus rejected, you will enquire perhaps what those were which Christ substituted in their Room: For without Rites an instituted Religion can hardly subsist among Mortals. To which I answer, that the Christian Rites are *few, innocent,*

innocent, plain, useful, and mighty in Operation, without Magick. A Multitude of Rites, like a great many Clouds, hide the Face of the Sun, or blunt and diminish his Rays. Things that are excellent in their own Nature, are but hurt by Ornament. Religion is always so to be handled and instituted, that what is most holy and most divine in it, that should be always chiefly before our Eyes, and should always shine out above every Thing else that belongs to it. Divines are wont to call our Rites by the Name of *Sacraments*, a Word that was taken from that solemn military Oath, which formerly the *Roman* Soldiers took upon their being enroll'd; of which only two were instituted by Christ, which are Baptism and the Eucharist; the one being a Rite of Initiation, the other of Confirmation and of Commemoration; by which we are commanded to commemorate the Death ^{1 Cor. xi.} of Christ, till his second Coming: And ^{25, 26.} as our Rites are but very few, so are they very plain, to be celebrated only with pure Water, or only with Bread and Wine. Here is nothing troublesome, nothing magnificent, nothing to incumber either the Worship of God, or the Worshippers; nor do they carry any Thing like Pomp with them, or any

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Sort of Ostentation: That they are innocent, the Thing itself declares. Christians never offer up Sacrifice to God with Blood and Slaughter; nor do they make use of any Ceremonies that are in the least unworthy or undecent, whether it be in the Initiation of their Novices, or in those sacred Duties which are perform'd by the Adept. Lastly, they are of the utmost Usefulness in promoting Religion; I mean internal Religion, and the Sanctity of Life. When we are dedicated to Christ in Baptism, we renounce the Devil and all his Works, which to destroy, as we have already said, Christ came into the World. We renounce all the vain Pomp of secular Glory, that we may pursue Things that are heavenly. Lastly, we renounce the unlawful Desires or Delights of the Flesh, that we may live spiritually to God, and be obedient to Reason, and not to deprav'd Affections; so that in the very Beginning of our Religion, when we deliver ourselves up to Christ, we are obliged to put away from us, and to abdicate all Wickedness; to fly from all the Fountains of Sin, the Fomenters and the Favourers of it. This Sacrament, or this Abjuration, is perform'd in Person, by those who are grown up, and in Children by their Sureties, who
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take that Care upon them, together with their Parents, that giving them carefully a Christian Education, they should faithfully perform, when they are grown up, what they promised by their Sureties upon their Initiation: And they who are chiefly appointed to take care of Religion, make it their Business to see that they do perform it, either by some following Confirmation, or upon their Admission to the Supper of the Lord.

BAPTISM indeed was in Use even among the Jews, in the Initiation of their Profelytes; and likewise among the Gentiles, washing with Water had Place among their sacred Ceremonies, and their Initiations: For Cleansing by Water is by Nature adapted to signify Purification; for as by that Washing the Body is outwardly cleansed, so the Mind is inwardly purg'd from its Impurities, and its Pollutions by the spiritual Operation of the sacramental Water. But if formerly the Christians (as some do now-a-days) added to this plain and necessary Rite some ceremonial Trifles, which appear to me to be neither of Force nor Use, that is to be allowed to the Age, the Country, and the People. The Jews, as you know very well, are very fond of their own Manners; nor is it an easy Matter to shake off altogether,

ther, and all at once, those antient Customs which long Habitude has made Men prone to continue: Nor do I wonder that the wiser and more considerate Christians should have been a little indulgent to this Propenseness, either of the Jews or the Gentiles: Such an Indulgence is due to the Weak, in a tender and growing Religion. What numerous Ceremonies, otherwise useless, did *Moses* introduce into the Religion which he instituted, that he might accommodate himself to the Jews, whom he had newly brought forth from an idolatrous Nation. Great Designs are not to be executed at a Heat, nor could Mankind be otherwise than gradually advanc'd to a pure, a bright, and a reasonable Religion. This Rite of Baptism was formerly attended in those who were Men grown, by extraordinary Gifts of the Spirit, but which are now ceased, and from Children they never could be expected.

THE other Christian Rite is the Commemoration of the Death of Christ, which we are wont to call the *Eucharist*, or the *Lord's Supper*. Each of these Appellations seems to respect the Jewish Institutions: The latter appears to regard the Paschal Lamb, and the former the Festival of the Sacrifice of the Eucharist.

rist. And this Sacrament comes up to, or rather surpasses all the Force and Significance of either Institution. 'Tis perform'd by Bread and by Wine taken in a moderate Portion, by which we commemorate his Body that was broken, and his Blood that was shed for us. These Symbols are sufficiently adapted to the Things, to which they are referr'd, are easily provided, and have sundry Uses: They remind us of whatever Benefits we have received from Christ, and of the inimitable Love which he shew'd to Mankind; when he offered himself to die for us, to die a tormenting and an ignominious Death, that he might redeem us from our Sins, and procure eternal Salvation for us. Besides, 'tis requisite that we should come to the Celebration of this Sacrament, not only with the utmost Reverence and Devotion, but also, that laying aside all Enmity, we should come with universal Charity. Lastly, by the Celebration of this Sacrament, we renew that Faith in Christ which we formerly vow'd at our Baptism: And if we have done any Thing amiss, we heartily repent of it, and promise an Amendment of our Lives and Manners. You see now that our external Rites are framed with such a View, that they remind every one of

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us of our Duty, and inspire our Souls with Sanctity, the Design and the ultimate End of the whole Christian Law.

HITHERTO I believe our Enemies can find no Fault with us, and throw no Blame upon us, with regard to our Worship, or to the Christian Rites; and that neither *Hebrew Rabbin*, or Heathen Priest or Philosopher, can charge either our Worship with Superstition, or our Rites with Superabundances, or with Emptiness or Insignificance. And we give free Leave to our Adversaries, nay, we intreat them, that they would compare our own, with the Worship and Rites both of the Jews and the Gentiles, that the Nature of each of them, by that Opposition, may be more clearly known: But you will say, perhaps, that according to this Idea, the Christian Religion is both simple, chaste, and pure; but that if 'tis consider'd practically, and according to the Administration of its sacred Rites, Additions of human Errors, and of human Inventions, have been crowded into them, or at least have been so intermingled with them, that they have detracted from their Purity, and *gradually* introduced Corruption. To which I answer, that we have no Design to defend the divine Worship, or the sacred Rites of every Church

Church that is titularly or nominally Christian; but as for the Institution of Christ himself and his Apostles, these we maintain to be innocent, pious, and truly holy. Our Fathers complain'd, and we too at present complain, that the Simplicity of the Christian Religion has been corrupted, as well with regard to its Doctrines as to its Worship; which the Heathens likewise observ'd. *Ammianus* L. 21. sub. fine. *Marcellinus*, in the Currency of the fourth Century, took notice that *Constantius set the Christian Religion, absolutely and simply taken, upon an equal Foot with an old Woman's Superstition.* Upon which that Historian likewise relates the Contentions and Quarrels among the Christian Priests, with Regard to their Rites: As for our Part, we favour or patronize no one's Rashness, and no one's Superstition. Let those whose Interest it is, take Care of it and defend themselves and their Cause. If any Rites have been introduced by way of Indulgence to the *Jews* or the *Gentiles*, they ought now to be abolished in Countries that are entirely Christian: And those who retain them, or who augment them, to the Scandal of the Christian Religion, and to its signal Prejudice, (which Fault in the *Roman Church* we lament) are to be admonish'd, and not

be defended. Every Thing superfluous, in my Opinion, is hurtful to Religion, because it diminishes the Force and the Influence of the other Parts of it, and the Care that we ought to take concerning them, and, as it were, seizes upon a Part of the Soul, when all of it is scarce sufficient to attend to the weightier and necessary Points of Religion. The Christian Religion has a great deal of Simplicity according to its first Institution; and least it should appear too naked, and by consequence despicable to the *Jews* and the *Gentiles*, when it was depriv'd of its Mysteries and of its Ceremonies, the Antients were oblig'd to accommodate Things in both Respects, to the Necessity of Ages and Nations; and sometimes, according to the Levity of human Nature, always inclining too much to Superstition; they made an odd Medley by the Addition of several Things, without any urgent Necessity. These Things that were rashly taken in, ought by Degrees to be thrown out again, that we may return to the Purity and the Simplicity of its original Institution.

Lastly, In those Things which are permitted to Christian Prudence, with respect to our sacred Mysteries, we are to consider not so much the Thing it
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self, which perhaps may be in its Nature indifferent, as the Difference of Circumstances. That which was equitable and allowable in a beginning and infant Church, may not be so convenient for one that is grown up, or may be wholly needless to it. The Affairs of the World are alter'd in every Age, and the Tempers of People are different in different Regions. As the *European* Nations have a greater Severity of Judgment than the other Parts of the World, so they are sharper Enquirers now than they have been formerly. We are going on, by the Help of God, to the naked Truth, and to pure Piety, having our Eyes always fix'd upon the Fundamentals of Religion, *viz.* the Sanctity of Soul, and the Integrity of Manners, that we may suit our Worship and our Faith to the *Habit*, the Nature and the Analogy of the Evangelical Dispensation. The Rules which the Apostles prescrib'd for the Exercise of Gifts divine, by a Parity of Reason, have place in the Institution of Rites. *πάντα πρὸς οἰκοδομὴν γένησθαι*, saith St. Paul, *Let all Things be done to Edification.* And then he adds, *πάντα ἡσυχυμένως καὶ ἑαυτὰ ἑαυτῶν γένησθαι*, *Let every Thing be done decently* 1 Cor. xiv. *and with Order.* The Observation of these Rules will keep us from erring in
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Externals. But Superstition arises two very different Ways, either by opposing convenient and becoming Rites, or by accumulating unseasonable, troublesome and unprofitable ones; for either of these is an Obstacle to Order and Edification. But then we are to take the utmost Care, as we have often advis'd, that our View of the primary Object may not be intercepted by the Multitude or Insignificancy of *little Ceremonies*. For to this one Point are all Things to be referr'd, that we may worship God, in Spirit and Truth, with Sanctity of Life, and Integrity of Manners. *The End of the Commandment* (saith St. Paul, according to the Will of Christ) *is Charity, 1 Tim. i. 5. from a pure Heart, and a good Conscience, and a Faith that is not dissembled.*

THESE Things being thus premis'd, we proceed to the last Point. We observ'd above, that the Christian Rites are not magically effectual, or, as they talk now-a-days, *ex ipso opere operato*, from the bare Performance of the Rites. No extraordinary Gifts from Heaven accompany Baptism now-a-days, even in Persons that are grown up. Much less can any internal Regeneration be concluded in Infants before they come to some tolerable Use of their Reason. But Baptism

tism is both to the one and the other a Rite that gives them an Entrance into a Covenant. And if both the one and the other [the Children when they are grown up] endeavour to make good the Faith which they gave, or which was given for them, no Aid or Assistance will be wanting on the Part of God, that may enable them to keep up to the Promises which they either made themselves, or which their Sureties made for them. Then as to the Eucharist, that is indeed a lively and actual Rite; but the Manner of exerting its Influence, is by moving the Affections, and exciting ardent Thoughts in the Soul concerning the Love and the Death of Christ, and the Benefits that flow from both of them, to those who faithfully worship him. And this Commemoration reminds us in our Turns of our Duty to Christ, that if we have any Thing generous in our Natures, or any grateful Memory of the Benefits we have receiv'd, we should become obedient in all Things to him who underwent a cruel Death for us, and who still intercedes for us in Heaven.

Thus far we have spoke concerning the Thing it self: Nor do we at the same time deny that some of the Fathers spoke in such a Manner concerning both these Christian Rites, Baptism and the

the Lord's Supper, as if there were some magical or mystical Power in each of them. As for what relates to Baptism, the Christians, in the Beginning of the Gospel, look'd upon the World to be in such Subjection and such Slavery, to the arbitrary Power of the Devil, that he was thought by them, as it were, to possess, and as in a manner to dwell in the very Persons of Unbelievers, or those who were not yet baptiz'd. And it was upon this Account, and with this View, that some of the Antients esteem'd Baptism to be a sort of Exorcism, or Adjuration, by which the unclean Spirit was driven away.* Then the young Disci-

* Cyril. Hierosol. Catec. Mystagog. *At the same time you hear one say, extending his Arm by way of Desfiance, as if he spoke to some Person present, Satan, I renounce thee. With those Things which follow. Catec. 1, 2, 3. See also Tertul. de Corona, cap. 3.*

Optatus Milev. l. 4. against Parmen. has these Words: 'Tis known to all, that no one who is born, tho' he is born of Christian Parents, can be without an unclean Spirit, who must of Necessity be separated, and driven out from the Man, before he enters into the Bath of Salvation. This is done by Exorcism, &c. Nor is St. Augustin of another Opinion, as appears by what he writes to Sixtus, Epist. 105. towards the End. *What can they answer to this, that Children are exorcis'd, &c. For certainly this is done fraudulently, if the Devil has not Dominion over them. Then, Theodoret in Chap. 1. Cant. p. 1002. Remember, that in the Celebration of the sacred Mysteries, after they have renounced the Tyrant, and acknowledg'd the King, they receive the Chrism of the spiritual Ointment, which is, as it were, a certain Royal Seal upon*

Disciples renouncing the Works of the Devil, the exorcising Priests adjur'd likewise the Water, sign'd it with the Cross; and in consecrating it, used other Ceremonies. And the Christians who succeeded them, often deferr'd Baptism till the Hour of Death, that being newly baptiz'd, they might ascend more pure and spotless up to Heaven.

SOME of these Ceremonies we have justly omitted, as supported by no Authority either of Christ, or his Apostles; and too apt to corrupt the Simplicity of this Christian Rite, as if there were some mystical Power attending it, which flow'd from the Performers of the Work it self. Whatever formerly, in the first Ages of the Church, was the Efficacy of this Sacrament upon converted Unbelievers; whatever extraordinary Endowments follow'd it, the same are not to be expected

upon them. Lastly, Gennadius Massil. de Ecclesiast. Dogm. c. 31. gives this Account of the whole Matter. *We cannot template with the utmost Intenseness of Thought, the uniform universal Practice of the Church of Christ, throughout the whole Christian World: For whether they are Children or Youth grown up, who come to the Sacrament of Regeneration, they approach not the Fountain of eternal Life before the unclean Spirit is driven out of them, by the Exorcisms of the Clergy.* " See also Constit. Apost. & Dionysius " Areop. in Feuarden. p. 96.

Apud
Suiq. voc.
ἐκφορ. p.
1151. sed
vid. Genn.
ipsam.

pected among those who are born Christians. As this is a Rite of the greatest Simplicity, 'tis most aptly celebrated with plain Water, that all superfluous and superstitious Additions being cut off from it, our *Worship* may appear in every Thing to be *reasonable*.

THUS far concerning Baptism: As for the Eucharist, those Things which either the Antients or the Moderns in explaining or in celebrating it, have added to the Institution of Christ and his Apostles, are to be cut off from it. We ought not in a Religion that was divinely deliver'd to us, to strike out new Mysteries, a new Sacramental Doctrine, and new Rites, according to the Will of Men. There is no natural and real Change, but only a moral one of the Bread or the Wine in the Sacrament, either at the Time of Consecration, or after it; all the Alteration consists in the transferring these Signs from the vulgar to a sacred Use. But they who by the Repetition of certain Words pretend to change these Terrestrial Bodies, which are of another Order, and of other Elements into the Celestial Body of Christ, seem to me to be willing to use Magick; nor is so great a Power conferr'd on the Priest by any Divine Promise. But of
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this Matter, and of the Sacraments, we shall treat further below.*

AMONG the *Gentiles* there were various magical Rites, which being perform'd after such a Manner, some extraordinary Effect was wont to follow; not by the Power of any natural or moral Causes, but only by Virtue of a secret Compact with some certain Spirits or Genii. The *Grecians* attributed a great deal of Power to those mystical Rites and ceremonies in the Worship of Gods, and Goddeses (which the *Grecians* call *πλάτεις*) and they declar'd that they who were fully and perfectly initiated in them, were happy both in this Life and in the Life to come. *The Ὀρφεοπλάτεις*, or they who were initiated in the sacred Rites of Orpheus, promis'd themselves Happiness in the Life to come. Which Doctrine, together with the sacred Rites, *Orpheus* seems to have deriv'd from the *Egyptians*. So says *Plutarch*. *Diodorus* likewise informs us, that those *Egyptian* Priests, who instructed others in the Mysteries, had the

Piuear.
Lacon. A-
pophtheg.
L. 5. P.
224.

* Where in a Second Part we shall treat of the Sacraments against the Papists. See *Hooker, lib. 6. p. 363, 364.* where he shews that the Papists cannot give any rational Account of that efficacious Power of bestowing Grace, which they attribute to the Sacrament; since they neither pretend that that is done immediately by the Spirit of God, nor do they say that it is done morally: Now, that it should be done physically or naturally, is absolutely impossible.

the Gods always propitious to them even in this Life, and the Bestowers of all Divine Gifts upon them. Διατίθενται δ' ἢ τούτων. 'Tis commonly reported, among the Egyptians, that the Gods, when they are invoc'd, appear to the INITIATED, and are immediately present in their Dangers: And that they became more holy, more just, and in every Respect more virtuous. And therefore that the most Illustrious of all the antient Heroes or Demy-Gods, among whom they number Orpheus, desir'd to be instructed in, and consecrated by these Mysteries. Let us hear likewise what Plato says concerning this Matter, who was instituted and instructed likewise by the Egyptians, ὁ δὲ ἀμύητος καὶ ἀπύλατος εἰς ἀδύ ἀφικνῆται, ἐν βροτῶν κείσεται. ὁ δὲ καθαδαρμένος, τε καὶ πεπαισμένος ἐκείσσι ἀφικόμενος, μετὰ θεῶν οἰήσει. He who being not initiated, nor Partaker of the Mysteries, shall descend to the Infernal World, shall lie wallowing there in Mud. But whoever after he has been cleansed and initiated shall arrive there, shall be a Cohabitant with the Gods. The Antients have said several Things to the same Purpose, * which every one may consult at his Leisure. B E.

Phædon.
p. 69.

Vid. ibid.
p. 81.

* Isocrates, concerning those Mysteries, says, That they who have been initiated to them, have livelier Hopes, both
Aristides

BESIDES, we may observe, that among the Heathens they had several Degrees of

with respect to Death, and with regard to Eternity. Aristides, in his *Panathenaicá*, says, That the Advantage of that sacred Solemnity consists not only in a present Tranquillity of Mind, not only in our being absolved and freed from the Evils which we underwent before, but in giving us a more lively Hope in the Article of Death, viz. a Hope, that we shall be dispos'd of in a happier Station than the rest of Men, and shall not lie wallowing in Mire, and in Darkness, which will be the Doom of those who die without being initiated. The Author of *Axiochus* in the Works of Plato towards the End, after he has made Gobrias the Magician describe the State of the Blessed in the *Elysian Fields*, makes him add, *There the Initiated possess the foremost Seats, and there they still perform the same sacred Ceremonies.* The *Athenians* said the same Thing to *Diogenes*; In the infernal World the Initiated have the foremost Places. The Pharisees were ambitious in this World of having the uppermost Places at Feasts, and the uppermost Seats in the Synagogues, *Matt. xxiii. 6.* The Sons of *Zebedee* seem to have desir'd the same Thing, with regard to the Kingdom which was to come, *Matt. xx. 21, 22.* Christ reprimands the Pride both of the one and the other, and their Affectation of Honour and Power. Now hear the Answer which *Dio-Laert.* in *genes* made to the foresaid *Athenians*: *How ridiculous is it vit. to believe, that Agesilaus and Epaminondas should dwell in Dirt and in Mire, and every vulgar Wretch that is initiated, should have his Habitation in the Islands of the Blessed.* *Anaxagoras* still made a severer Reply to a Priest of *Orpheus*, upon his saying, that the Initiated were Partakers of great Felicity in the World below. *Why then do you not die,* says *Diogenes.* *Sophocles* says much the same Thing concerning these Mysteries, with the Priest of *Orpheus*, whose Sentiment, therefore, *Plutarch*, concerning this Matter, opposes to that of *Diogenes*, *De audiendis Poetis.* (p. 21.) and declares the Sentiment of the latter to be too severe. We must indeed own, that the most wise and virtuous among the Heathens added to these Mysteries a better way of living, and the Knowledge of the most excellent Things. See at your Leisure, *Cicero. de Leg. l. 2. c. 14.* & *Arrian. in Epict. l. 3. c. 21.* To this *πανήγυριν & τελεσιουργίαν*, the Apostle to the *Hebrews* seems to allude, *cap. xii. 22.*

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of Initiation in their sacred Worship; and that they had divers Mysteries, the greater and the less, till they came up to Perfection. Of these, as well the *Grecian* as the *Barbarian*, thus says *Clemens Alexandrinus*: *In the Grecian Mysteries in the first place are their Lustrations, as among the Barbarians there is Cleansing with Water. After these come the little Mysteries, which have some System of Doctrine, that regards and prepares for Futurity: But the great Mysteries are concerning the Universe. When you come to them, there is no more Occasion for Learning. The Business is to inspect and comprehend in your Mind Nature and Things themselves. We meet with this Distinction often among the Antients. See Suidas in the Word Εἰσὶν. Seneca's natural Questions, l. 7. c. 31. & Epist. 90. and the Writers concerning the Eleusinian Mysteries, and several others.*

THERE were no less among the *Jews*, divers Degrees, if you will pardon the Word of *Profelytism*. In the first Place they had their Profelytes of the *Gate*, then their Profelytes of *Justice*, to use their own Expression; and in receiving and initiating these, they had different Rites, as is known to all. But lastly, to come to what we design'd by all this, the Apostles,

Apostles, whose Examples we propose to be follow'd, use nothing either strange or indecent, or superstitious in the Initiation of their Profelytes.

It appears to me to have been usual among the primitive Christians, to imitate the Heathens in this Progress or Gradation in their sacred Rites; for the Christians likewise distributed into several Classes those who were to be converted to the Faith, and into these two, particularly the *Learners* and the *Illuminated*, of whom we find mention every where in the Writings of the Fathers, of their Distinctions, their Duties and their Privileges. In like manner the Ancients distinguish'd the Christian Doctrine into τὰ ἑνδοξα, & τὰ ἀπορρητα: The former might be declar'd to every one. The latter were Secrets that were to be entrusted only with the Adept or the Perfect. And St. Paul seems to have Regard in several Places to that Distinction of Doctrines and Disciples, 1 Cor. ii. 6, 7. Phil. iii. 15. Heb. v. 13, 14. 1 Tim. vi. 1. And ancient Divines following his Example, as they thought, refus'd to declare openly the τὰ ἀπορρητα, or τὰ μυστήρια, either in their familiar Conversations, or in their Catechisms, or in their Sermons, especially before the Heathen Catechumens, or

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Learners, or any Persons whatsoever, who were not initiated, who being present, they either broke off the Discourses they had begun, and were silent, or they signified the sacred Matter obscurely, and in ambiguous Words, with the Addition of this Form, *ἴσασιν οἱ μυστημίνοι, ἴσασιν οἱ μοῖ;* *the Initiated know it, the Faithful are acquainted with it.* Which Sayings we very often meet with in the Writings of the Fathers.

BESIDES, there are in the Heathen Writers * many and most severe Precepts concerning the concealing the sacred Mysteries. Which Discipline was of Force among the Philosophers, and particularly the *Pythagoreans*. And very many of the Christian Doctors, as we hinted before, follow'd the same Method, and the same Footsteps, in observing the Discipline of the *Arcanum*,

as

* When it appears by the very Form that is used, that a faithful Silence is due to Mysteries of no kind. The Samothracian and Eleusinian Mysteries are kept always secret. Much more ought those to be so kept, which, being divulg'd, might call down human Censure upon those who are present at them, de Tertul. Apolog. c. 7. We meet with Things to the same Purpose in the Verses of Orpheus, It is not lawful for the Prophane, or the Non-initiated, to make particular mention of the Things that are done in performing the Ceremonies of the Mysteries. Diodor. Sic. l. 3. m. p. 196. Many Things of the like Tendency are to be found in antient Authors, as well Christian as Heathen, which having been compil'd by others, are too well known to be repeated here.

as 'tis called, that is, of the Secret. Besides, it was a Custom common both to Christians and Heathens, as appears from both their Rituals, to exclude or remove the Non-initiated, while some more secret Rites were performing. Lastly, the Christians have borrow'd the very Words that signify the Heathen Rites, as *μυηθῆναι*, *μύησις*, *μεμυημένοι*, and *ἄμύητοι*, that is, to be Initiated, Initiation, the Initiated, and the Non-initiated. Then *τέλειον*, *τετελειωμένοι*, *ἀτέλειοι*: That is, Perfection, the Perfect, and the Imperfect: *ἐνότης* and *ἐκότης*, and others of this kind, as is known to all who are conversant in the Writings of the Fathers. But of these enough.

BUT whether they were Phrases, or Customs, or Ceremonies, which the Christians transferr'd from the Worship of the *Jews* or the *Gentiles* to their own, I am willing to interpret the Matter candidly, and to believe that it was not done with any ill Design, but with Intention, as they imagin'd, to adorn the Christian Religion, lest it should be thought too naked, simple and vulgar; or it was done in Complaisance to the *Jews* and the *Gentiles*, that they might appear in some measure to partake of the same Rites with them, or at least not wholly to depart from them, by an

Affectation of Novelty. But such Considerations are now no more. But Times and Conjunctures and Occasions being chang'd, Counsels and Designs, and the Methods of acting are to be chang'd likewise. The Things that have ceas'd to be useful are to be thrown off, as not only superfluous, but hurtful, as they either taint or corrupt the Simplicity of the Christian Religion; as Paint that at first is us'd as an Ornament, comes at last to corrode the Skin, and to despoil it of its natural Beauty. There is a Passage in *Tertullian*, which severely reprimands these and the like Superstitions.

De Orat.
c. 12.

But because, says he, we have already touch'd upon something which we observ'd at a Time when we had very great Leisure (where he means Washings and outward Cleanness) I am willing likewise to set a Mark upon other Things, which may justly be upbraided with Vanity, because they are used without the Authority of any Precept, either from our Lord or his Apostles. For Things of this Nature are rather accounted superstitious than religious, being affected, forc'd, and to be look'd upon rather as curious Performances, than as just and reasonable Duties; and certainly ought upon this Account to be

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restrain'd, because they bring us upon a Level with the Gentiles.

Now to speak what the Thing requires, we have no Mysteries in our Divine Worship as the *Gentiles* have. We have nothing hidden nor conceal'd in nocturnal Rites; every Thing is done openly. There is no Distinction in this Matter between the Initiated and the Vulgar, which were too much distinguish'd both by the *Jews* and the *Gentiles*, (*Mat. ix. 11. & xi. 19. Joh. ix. 34.*) οἱ πτωχοὶ ἐὺαγγελίζονται, the Poor have the Gospel preach'd to them; of which Christ made mention to *John*, among the other Proofs and Marks of his Dispensation, *Mat. xi. 5.* The Gospel has regard to no peculiar Nation, to no particular Order of Men, but comprehends all human Kind. And if formerly the Antients introduc'd some little Ceremonies into their Sacraments, and commanded Silence and Secresy, either that they might procure more Veneration and Reverence to them, or for whatever other Cause, that is to be given to the Times in which they liv'd, but not to be retain'd in ours. All Things are now at *Mat. x.* last to be declar'd openly, to be done^{27.} and explain'd openly. We are asham'd of no Precept, of no Christian Rite. Our Institution flies from no Examination,

tion, and from no one's Presence. We appeal in every Thing to right Reason, and to Divine Authority. Lastly, we place our main Dependance for our Salvation, not in the Performance of Rites and Ceremonies, but in the Holiness of our Lives, and the Purity of our Souls and Thoughts; and we believe that in Proportion to these internal Talents, God will measure out to every one his own Beatitude.

As for the lesser Things which remain, as the appointing Fasts or Festivals, or sacerdotal Habits, and necessary Forms to be us'd in the Performance of Divine Worship, let all Things be done agreeable to Christian Prudence, and the Rules of the Apostles, to Decency and Edification, that Superstition on the one side, and Rudeness on the other, may be equally avoided. And thus far with Brevity have we treated of the Christian Rites.

CHAP. VI.

Of the moral Rules, and the Precepts for the Conduct of Mens Lives, according to the Christian Law.

WE have already made some Remarks in what we have said above, concerning the Morals of Christians, or the moral Discipline, according to the Christian Law. The Law of Nature is the Foundation of every moral Law. But what the Apostle said of the Gospel, may be said of this Foundation, that divers People build different Superstructures upon this Foundation, as Gold, Silver, precious Stones, Wood and Straw. Of these Superstructures, some are solid, apt and proper; others light and useles. And these Things ought to be observ'd and deliberately weigh'd, before we approve or disapprove of the particular Laws of either *Jews* or *Gentiles*, or any other sort of People whatever. In the moral Doctrine of the Gospel we find nothing superfluous, and nothing useles, much less do we meet with any Thing hurtful, or contrary to the Law of Nature. I said that is *contrary*

trary to the Law of Nature; for we must distinguish between the Law of Nature and the Liberty of Nature. That which is free in the State of Nature may be restrain'd by a positive Law, for the Benefit either of some particular Society, or of Mankind in general, or on Account of Salvation in the Life to come. And that is wont to be practis'd in every Nation as often as Occasion requires it, by reason of the publick Advantage.

THESE Things being premis'd, it will easily appear that there is nothing but what is just and right, and worthy of Praise in the *moral Evangelical Law*. But, O the Grief and the Shame! at what a Distance are the Manners of Christians from their Laws? How vast a Difference is there between the Lives of modern Christians, and the Rules and Precepts which Christ and his Apostles gave us, and the Examples which they left us. Far be it from me to mean such Things here as were formerly objected to the Christians, as *Thyestran* Banquets, magick Arts, incestuous Enjoyments, and other Things of the like Nature. These I esteem to be Calumnies of the blackest kind, and invented by the Malice either of *Jews* or *Gentiles*, or Hereticks. These were the envenom'd Bites and Defamations of Enemies, to draw upon them

them the Envy of the unbelieving World; but the Darts of our Friends, and the Wounds they inflict on us, are much more dangerous and more formidable; and the Complaints which they pour forth, are of all the most lamentably grievous. The devoutest of Christians complain'd formerly, and even now complain, of the Manners of their own Times. Peruse at your Leisure the third and fourth Books of *Salvianus of the Government of God*. In the third Book, among other Things, he hath these: *How few are to be found, &c.* M. p. 49. Shame restrains me from saying the rest. Then towards the End of the same Book he adds, *By which Means it comes to pass, that we who are call'd Christians, lose the Honour of so great a Name by the Degeneracy of our Manners: For of what Advantage can be nominal Sanctity with actual Immorality? When the Conduct of our whole Lives giving the Lie to our Profession, attaints the Honour of an illustrious Title by the Baseness of unworthy Actions, &c.* And in the following Book, *Since then these* M. p. 78. *Things are thus, we may flatter our selves, if we please, with the great Prerogative of the Christian Name, when our Lives and Actions are of such a Nature, that the very taking upon us the Title of*
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*Christians, is an Affront to Christ. But on the other Side, where shall we find any Thing among the Heathens, like to what we are speaking of, &c. In short, he represents Christians more wicked than the very Barbarians.**

BUT now, when Things are in this Condition, what if the Apostles should rise from the Dead, and behold the Face of the Christian World, all deform'd with Vice, and nothing but the Shadow of a great Name? Would they not be ashamed, and almost repent of the Pains they had taken for the Conversion of Mankind? Or suppose that instead of the Apostles the Philosophers and Sages of the Gentiles would rise again, and taking a View of this Globe of the Earth, should ask us, of what Advantage the Christian Religion has been to Mankind, either with Regard to Morality and Integrity

* See what an Image of the World St. Cyprian gives us in his second Epistle to *Donatus*; where, omitting those Passages which related more peculiarly to the Times in which the Heathen Religion prevail'd, the rest is but too applicable to the Christian Times. The Christians seem to me to have abus'd their Dispensation, no less than the *Jews* did formerly theirs. Nor did *Isaiab*, *Jeremiab*, and other Prophets, reproach them with more, or with greater Sins, than might be objected to us, if God would vouchsafe to plead his own Cause against us.

tegrity of Life, or with Regard to Peace and publick Good. Ye call us *Barbarians* by way of Reproach, but in what are you Christians better than us *Barbarians*? Let those among us return Answers to these Enquiries, who have the Administration of divine and human Affairs. I shall only take Care to prove that the Christian Religion, provided it be firmly adher'd to, is the most excellent and the most advantageous, as well for forming the Manners, as for promoting the publick Good; and which is of greater Moment than all, for the obtaining Salvation and eternal Felicity for the Race of Men in the World to come.

EVERY moral Institution consists of Precepts and Examples; and is establish'd by the just Distribution and Sanction of Rewards and Punishments. The Christian Religion leaves us not destitute, with Regard to any of these. First, as to the Precepts, they are not indeed digested methodically, and in Chapters, as the Ethicks of the Philosophers are wont to be; nor are they to be read contracted together, like a Body of Laws, or the Systems of learned Men: But they are scatter'd up and down in the Discourses of Christ, and in the Writings of the Apostles; on which Account the Vulgar are more commodiously instructed, and

and by reading the sacred Writings, the Doctrine of Salvation is by Degrees imbib'd. Nor is the Law of the Gospel defective in any kind of Duty whatever, tho' it be deliver'd less compactly, and without any artful Method. In the first Place, whatever Things by the Law or the Light of Nature appear to be decent and worthy, and deserving of Praise, those we are oblig'd to follow and to embrace; and to prefer them to other Duties, if once they come to oppose one another. Then it comprehends all human Acts, both Thoughts, and Words, and Deeds. And in each of them it follows the right Way, and the Footsteps of pure Integrity. In our Words especially, whether they are us'd in familiar Conversation, or in our Dealings with others, it constrains, it compels, it commands us to use Fidelity, Sincerity and Simplicity, without any Daubing, any Deceit, or Artifice. Nor does it suffer us to take or to use any Oath, without it be on a weighty and a publick Occasion. Nor does it on any Occasion whatever, allow of Perjury, of Cursing, of bearing false Witness, or of reproachful or opprobrious Language. Then all Calumnies and clandestine Detractions, and every Thing that hurts or undermines the Reputation of another, whether it be
through

through some sinister Design, or through any private Malice, are with us forbidden, and odious. Besides, we are oblig'd in all our Conversation, as likewise in every Thing else, to use Modesty, Decency, Courtesy, banishing Scurility, and all unworthy Levity. Nor do we less condemn and avoid all Bitterness and Harshness of Speech, and all Biting, and illiberal Jest. To say all in a Word, we severely bridle the Tongue, and curb all Extravagance and Licentiousness of Speech; that nothing that is either unbecoming in it self, or injurious to our Neighbours, or prophane, or impious, or irreligious towards God, may proceed from a Christian Mouth.

MUCH more are Christians in their Actions and Practises forbid every kind of Evil, though never so light and little, nay, every Appearance of Evil. We ought not only to be free from Guilt, ^{1 Theff. v. 22.} but from any Approach to it, nay, from any Suspicion of it. 'Tis not sufficient that a Christian be just according to human Laws. Whatever Humanity requires, whatever Charity or mutual Benevolence, we are commanded to observe religiously. And more especially in the Duties of Charity, the Christian Law shines out above all Institutions whatever, either of the *Jews* or the *Gen-*

Gentiles. We are not to do good to our Friends alone, but to our very Enemies; that we may imitate our heavenly Fathers. We are to succour the Poor, the Sick, and the Weak, both with our Advice and Assistance. As Christ our Legislator best understood the Weight of human Misery, he made the best Provision for it. The Philosophers being taken up with lofty Thoughts, almost pass'd by the Vulgar of Mankind, or left them to be govern'd every one by the Laws of his own Nation. They adapted their Precepts to the Wise, and to the Searchers after Truth; and look'd upon the Vulgar as prophane and almost contemptible: But our most good and most merciful Saviour, had quite other Thoughts, and quite other Designs; whose Divine Love comprehended all human Kind, let them be what or where they would, and determin'd to assist them with his Law and his Counsels. Therefore taking a View of human Infirmities, the melancholy State of Humanity, their Necessities, their Diseases, their Calamities, and all those Difficulties that are inseparable from mortal Life; that he might bring some Relief, at least, to Miseries that could not be entirely remov'd. He enjoin'd the Works of Charity and Mercy, and of mutual Assistance

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to every one in his own Class, and promis'd that every Thing of that Nature should be a hundredfold rewarded in the Life to come. Nor did he command us only to give Ease and Comfort in the Diseases of the Body, but much more in those of the Mind. For to prevent, or to apply a Cure to Vice, Error, Ignorance, all three most grievous Distempers, and to point out the Way of Salvation to a People of Transgressors, is a Benefit of a higher Nature, than to expel Fevers, or Cold, or Hunger. Therefore Christ gave us Precepts for forming the Manners that are open, and manifest, and obvious, and plain, to the meanest Understanding; that every Man might be perfectly acquainted with his Duty, and the Way to Heaven might be known to all.

AND that every one may have a Rule of what is just and right, easy to be understood, and at all Times ready, and, as it were, a domestick Judge in his Breast, *What you would not have done to your self,* says Christ, *never do that to another.* Than which there can be no Law more equitable. We are too favourable, for the most part, to our selves. That there may be an equitable Determination, let the Person be chang'd, and place your self in the Room of the

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Guilty,

Mat. xviii.
22.

Guilty, or of the Indigent; and whatever Indulgence you would desire for your self, offending or wanting, in the same Manner, all that Indulgence grant to another. There can be no juster Method or Measure of Dealing among Mortals, who are Sinners all, and all in some measure indigent, than that Allowance being made for human Passions, and for human Infirmities, we should not exact on Account of each other in our Actions and Dealings, according to the strictest Severity of Justice. Nor are we only commanded in doubtful Matters to use the more candid Interpretation, and pursue the more gentle Measures; we are oblig'd to forgive one another the most apparent Offences; O God! how often, and how long are we oblig'd to it, by thy own Precept or Counsel?

FOR the same Reason we are forbid all private Revenge, least we should offend through Self-love, or an impetuous Motion of Anger. The lighter Injuries are to be wink'd at for the Preservation of Peace and Friendship; and we are, as well as we can, to bear with the greater. But when Injuries are too great to be born with, and Differences are too difficult to be compos'd, we are permitted to bring our Cause before the Magistrate, that the Matter may be justly determin'd

min'd without either Fear or Affection. To this Moderation and this Gentleness we are oblig'd in our Dealings with private Men. But with regard to the Prince or the Magistrate, we are still to have a greater Measure of Patience. They are the Ministers of God for the Publick, and for the sake of that Good we are to bear with all Things that are not intolerable. Civil War is an outrageous Monster, that devours and swallows the Guilty alike, and the Innocent. Nor ought the Christian Magistrate to make War with a foreign Power, unless compell'd to it by extream Necessity. Lastly, that I may say all in a Word, with regard to Justice, we give every one his Due, according to the various Ranks and Degrees of Men. Nor do we do this niggardly or reluctantly, but chearfully and abundantly.

AND thus the Law of Christ retains and transcends the Rules of Justice, which the Law of Nature prescribes. We are next to speak concerning Temperance, and what every one owes to himself, with regard to the Government of his own Body, what to the Preservation of the Divine Part of himself, and what to the restraining that brutal Nature, of which he in some Measure participates. First of all, we are commanded to be sparing,

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modest,

modest, and moderate in the Use of corporeal Pleasures, to rule by our Reason all our Appetites, and all our inferior Senses ; and that upon no Account whatever we indulge an unbridled Licentiousness, whether it be upon sacred Festivals, or ordinary Entertainments. We have no *Bacchanalian*, no impure or frantick Rites. Drunkenness and Lasciviousness are not becoming of a worthy Man, and much less of a Christian. 'Tis base to be a Slave to one's Mouth and one's Belly, and the other carnal Desires. We give Commendation to chaste Celibacy, and Marriage we esteem honourable ; but the Marriage of one with one, without the Allowance of a Divorce, unless in case of Adultery. And we are oblig'd to live in all other Respects, as becomes sober and virtuous Men.

WHAT we are taught by the Christian *Philosophy*, if I may use the Expression, when it treats of the *Contempt of the World*, and the utter Scorn of all human Things compar'd to Things Divine, and of temporal Things compar'd to Things eternal ; and all that it teaches us, when it so often warns us to mortify and subdue this Flesh that annoys the Mind, while it dwells in this brutal Body, this Body too much inclin'd to im-

impure and sordid Pleasures; all that we are taught by it of this kind, discovers to us the Meaning, the Nature, and the Purport of the Christian Law; and puts us in mind, that the Worshippers in this Law ought to be temperate, not only with regard to corporeal Pleasures, but to the Courting of Honour, and the Desire of Riches, and every Thing else that relates to this transitory and animal Life. And if you find any Thing in our Practice that does not answer to this, that is not to be look'd upon as the Fault of the Law or the Legislator, but of those false Christians who usurp the Name; who after they have bound themselves by a sacred Oath, to renounce all worldly Desires, and to consecrate themselves to God alone, violate the Faith which they had so solemnly given.

'Tis the Business of an Epicure to take care of his Body; 'tis the Business of a Christian to take care of his Soul; compar'd to which, as we are taught by Christ, the Universe is vile and sordid: This Mass of extended Substance is frail, and its Figure transitory, like that of this mortal Body. But the Soul is immortal, and can never die, and reflects with Disdain and with Indignation on becoming a Slave to a perishing Body

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and a perishing World. Besides, we are taught by the Christian Doctrine, that we are Strangers and Pilgrims in this World: Why do you look here for quiet Seats, for Places of Rest and Ease? Why do you look here for Riches or Honours, that to Morrow will disappear? Seek, above all Things, the Kingdom of Heaven, an abiding City, and everlasting Treasures, which neither Moths can eat and devour, nor Thieves break through and steal. We are admonish'd by all this, to be contented with little in this Life, since we aspire to the Enjoyment of the greatest Felicity in the World to come. There is our true and our native Country, there our Hope, and there our Inheritance.

IF I would speak concerning Christian *Fortitude*, I am furnish'd with many Precepts, and with many Examples. But here I would not the Reader should understand that martial Fortitude, which delights in Blood, and which is animated by vain Glory: By Christian Fortitude, I mean that Firmness of Mind, and that Constancy, by which we are arm'd to suffer bravely in a good Cause, and to bear adverse Fortune with an equal Mind. True Fortitude is most illustrious in the Defence of Truth, and of Virtue: When neither the Fear of
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Men in Power, nor the Loss of Fame, nor even of Life, can deter us from prosecuting those noble Designs, that may bring Advantage to Mankind. It was in this Magnanimity that Christ preceded us by his Example, the Apostles preceded us, and all the rest of the noble Army of Martyrs: 'Tis in these Things that the Christian Magnanimity is exercis'd, and is beheld with Pleasure by God, and by good Men: Not in the Heat and the Rage of Battle, in scaling Walls, and hostile Bulwarks, while the Blood is all in a tumultuous Ferment, and the Veins swell, and Fear and Reason are banish'd together. True Magnanimity is a sedate and severe Thing, placed in the inmost Recess of the Mind; nourish'd by Meditation and calm Reason, not like martial Fury, by the Fumes of fermented Blood, or the raging Heat of the Vitals. True Magnanimity does not oppress nor overwhelm Nature by its Noise and its Violence, but hearkens calmly to its Complaints, supports it sinking, and follows victorious Reason. Nor does it bear either Grief or Pain, or make an uncommon Effort to perform some extraordinary Action through any Affectation of singular Glory, or Intention of acquiring a great Name, but from the Love of

God, of Justice, of Truth, and of universal Good.

I said, that in this School of Patience, Christ preceded us by his Example. He preceded us certainly, and came off most gloriously. He not only underwent the smaller Grievances to which human Nature is liable, but felt all the fiercest Pangs, and the sharpest Stings of Sorrow; he felt them, bore them, and conquer'd them. He foreknew the Miseries which he was to endure, nor did he fly from them. They seiz'd not upon him suddenly, nor unexpectedly, but he was foretold of them, and foresaw them. All that he suffered he underwent spontaneously and deliberately; nor did he withdraw himself from the impending Blow. But what did Christ endure, (you will ask) and to what Intent? The Reproaches and the Scoffs of the People, their Calumnies and their Tumults. His Enemies were not only the mad and the thoughtless Rabble, but the Chiefs and Presidents of the *Jewish* Congregation. They not only contemn'd him; they not only disdain'd him, as a vile and vulgar Creature, but brought him before their Tribunal, after they had bought him for thirty Pieces of Silver, and falsly accus'd him as a Disturber and a Blasphemer. They bound him, scourg'd

Mat. xxxi.
16.

scourg'd him, and mock'd him with bitterness Scoffs and Taunts. They cloath'd him in Purple, put a mock Sceptre into his Hand, and a painful Crown of Thorns on his Head, and all in Scorn and Merriment: They preferr'd a Thief and a Robber before him: They spit upon him, loaded him with Blows, and with Affronts of every Kind. But why was all this, and to what Intent? I ask. Why, after they had wrongfully condemn'd him, they hurry'd him to Execution; yes, they dragg'd an innocent Man to Death, after they had wrongfully condemn'd him. Hear this from the Mouth of his Judge, *When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a* Mat. xxvii. 24, 25. *greater Tumult was made, he took Water, and wash'd his Hands before the Multitude, saying, I AM INNOCENT OF THE BLOOD OF THIS JUST PERSON: See ye to it. Then answered all the People, and said, His Blood be upon us, and upon our Children.* These Things are terrible; but still another Question remains: With what kind of Death did they execute him? I hope a light and a sudden one; or not an infamous one, at least. Yea, the *Jews* were sparing neither of Torments nor Ignominy: *Jesus of Nazareth was nail'd to the Cross between*

tween two Thieves, in the Field of Golgotha, all the People mocking him, and deriding him. Behold a very mournful Tragedy ! But to what End, or with what Design, did Christ suffer so many cruel Things ? I answer, for the Salvation of Mankind, for Confirmation of the Truth of that Religion which he was about to establish, and for the obtaining celestial and eternal Glory.

THUS far concerning the Example of Christ, which we ought to have often before our Eyes, to follow it, and to imitate it, according to the utmost of our Power. Let us courageously bear the Reproaches of the Vulgar, and the Calumnies of malicious Persons. Let us persist in the Cause of Truth, and of Justice, with a gentle, yet unbroken Spirit, though Authority and Power should interpose and resist us. Christ and his Apostles have often reminded us in what sort of World we live, and have given Proofs of it by their Examples, (*Joh. xiv. 17. and xv. 18, 19. and xvi. 33. and xvii. 14. and xviii. 36. 1 Cor. ii. 12. Heb. xi. 30. Jam. iv. 4. 1 Joh. ii. 15, 19.*) Let us not be disturb'd then, or in the least astonish'd, as at some new and unexpected Event, though the World should hate us, and despitfully treat us. Whatever deserves

Mat. x. 33.

Mar. viii.

38.

Luk. ix.

26.

2 Tim. ii.

12.

1 Pet. iv.

12. 13. 14.

&c.

serves to have Conscience for its Witness, and to have God for its Spectator, that boldly and bravely do, in spite of the Noise and Outcries of a frantick World. This is becoming of a true Christian, a courageous and magnanimous Christian, who flies from the Punishments of another World, and expects everlasting Felicity. Mat. x. 32, 33.

NOR IS HUMILITY, the most to be prais'd and admir'd of all the Christian Virtues, in the least repugnant to this Fortitude and Magnanimity. For Humility consists in comparing our own Little-ness, with the Greatness and Perfection of God; and the more we are sensible of that infinite Inequality, the less ought we to esteem our selves, and to look upon our selves as Dust, as Worms, as Mites, or rather as nothing. And we ought to bear, without the least Murmuring, whatever Lot, whatever Station, whether the Highest or Lowest, or Middlemost, Providence has been pleas'd to appoint for us. But confiding in this infinite Wisdom, Justice and Goodness, we ought not in the least to doubt, that all Things will happen well to the Righteous, and otherwise to the Wicked, as long as the Governor of the World whirls about with an immense Circumvolution the universal Machine
of

of Matter. And being animated and exalted by that Hope, and by that Faith; we look down upon every Thing that can happen to us in this frail and momentary Life: Lastly, we ought to consider that the human Soul is immortal, and that we our selves are alive long after the Body is laid in the Dust, and that Christ has promis'd us an eternal Life, and a Life eternally happy, upon Condition that we square our Thoughts and Actions in Obedience to his Commands; why then should we murmur at the Inconveniencies of a Moment? why think much of fugitive Sorrows and Pains that pass away, or any Sufferings that are not in the least to be compar'd with the Weight of future Glory? Proceed then, O Christian! follow your Captain with redoubled Courage, who leads you on to certain Conquest, and to certain Glory; and always have your Eye intent upon the Reward to come: Humble, submissive, suppliant, with respect to God, but intrepid, with regard to a sinful World, whenever the Cause of God is in question, the Cause of Truth and Virtue.

Rom. viii.
18, 38, &c.
2 Cor. iv.
17, 18.
Heb. xii.
2.

HUMILITY too is to be practis'd with respect to Men, as that Virtue is oppos'd to Pride, and to a haughty Contempt of others. For those are Vices which

which ought to be esteem'd most odious. Now Pride arises from the mistaken Value which a Man puts upon himself, or upon the Advantages which he enjoys above others. When elevated by our Birth, our Riches, our Titles, or other external or frail and fading Advantages, we scornfully look down upon those who are placed in an inferior Station, or entertain a meaner Opinion of them than we ought justly to have. 'Tis true indeed, Honour is due to the Great-ones of this World, in order to keep up Subordination, without which there can be no Government; but true Dignity is to be measur'd by internal Qualities, and Endowments of the Mind, which will never decay. And they who chiefly cultivate those, are never lofty or insolent, either to their Equals, or their Inferiors, but do their Duty alike to both, and perform with Applause the Parts entrusted to them. Not that we are oblig'd to shew an abject Spirit, or meanly to undervalue our selves; but let our Esteem of our own Merit be always modest and moderate. Let us be sparing in our Censures, our Suspensions, or Accusations, whether publick or private; and being conscious to our selves of our own Infirmities, let us be always inclinable
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to that Side which is favourable to another's Merit.

Mat. xv.
19.

HITHERTO we have consider'd the external Manners, the Words and Actions that come from us. But God is the Discerner of our Thoughts and Affections, which are the Fountains of Good and Evil, and the Sources of future Felicity, or of eternal Misery. We require that all Men should be sincere, and we penetrate into the very Vitals and inmost Recesses of the Soul. The Judaick Law, which was supported by temporal Rewards alone, was satisfied with an external Innocence of Manners in those who were govern'd by it. I speak of the Letter, of the Mosaick Law: For far be it from me to believe, but that there were Persons among the *Jews*, who, from their very Hearts and Souls, were Men of Piety, and of Integrity. But those were taught in a higher School than the rest: For as for those who were mere *Jews*, they believ'd that after they had comply'd with the Precepts of their Law, and perform'd the Rites and Ceremonies which it enjoin'd them, they were justified before God; as the *Epistles* of St. *Paul* sufficiently testify. But that cannot be truly affirm'd of the Christian Law: For that sets no Value upon Works that are otherwise good, with-

Mat. v. 20.
1 Cor. xiii.
3.

without the Affection of the Heart, and the vital Warmth of Piety, and of Charity; without which Christ has declar'd, that the most extraordinary Gifts and Endowments, and the most wonderful Virtues, are of no Significance, much less deserving of Heaven; which the Apostle believes to be like sounding Brass, without any Force or Effect. Lastly, we have but little Esteem for, if we do not utterly condemn the bare Title and Name of a Christian, external Worship, sacred Rites, and an empty Form of Godliness, without internal Sanctity. Both the *Jews* and the *Gentiles* too much confided in these; who believ'd, that after they had gone through their Initiations, and the rest of their sacred Ceremonies, they had discharg'd all the Duties of Religion. We are far from entirely acquiescing in these; notwithstanding which we make use of them, in order to the uniting our Wills to God, and the inflaming our Breasts with the Love of Things Divine. The Christian Religion is not a dry and a barren Religion, that has its Seat in the Understanding alone, or that is made up only of external Actions, but is a lively, and, if I may so express my self, an affectionate Religion. It cleaves to the very Marrow of its Disciples, and pierces to their inmost Souls, passes through

Mat. vii.
21, 22, 23.
1 Cor. xiii.
12.

2 Tim. iii.

through, and seasons all the Faculties of the Mind, and brings them over to take part with God, with Piety, and with Virtue.

IN like Manner, when the Business is to restrain Vice, the Christian Religion does not only forbid deprav'd and disorderly Manners; but regards as so many Sins, the very Motions and Desires of the Mind, which are impure and unlawful. *Blessed are the Pure in Heart,* says Christ, *for they shall see God.* Then by a Parity of Reason, the Impure in Heart, whatever the outward Appearance may be, shall not see God. Now in that Vision the Height of Happiness consists. For the Seeds of our future Condition are sown in the very Bottom of the Soul: And when after having left off this Body, it comes to remain naked, and to live to God, and it self alone, from these Two is all its Happiness to be deriv'd, *viz.* from the Enjoyment of God and it self. For God communicates himself to every one, and his Influence, that brings Salvation along with it, according to the Quality of the recipient Subject. And the more the Soul is sensible of its Likeness to God, and of its Capacity to enjoy intellectual Things, the more it rejoices, and the more it enjoys its Condition and
its

Mat. v. 8.
& ver. 21;
28, &c.

its God. And lastly, at the Resurrection, the Purity of the Body will follow the Purity of its Inmate, will shine with the Rays which it borrows from that, and imitate its Glory. And to say all in a Word, the Habits, Dispositions, and Affections of the Mind, are the Roots of Good and of Evil in this Life, and of Happiness or Misery in the Life to come. And for this Reason, the Christian Precepts are chiefly applied to these, in order to purge and renew the inward Spirit; that the morbidick Matter being taken away, not only the Mind, but the whole Man may recover perfect Health. Whatever therefore we do outwardly, whether it be with regard to God, or with relation to Men; whether it has respect to sacred Matters, or to the common Business of Life, it is of no Validity, of no Advantage, unless it proceeds from, and is nourish'd by an internal Principle. Let every Thing be done sincerely, and without Disguise, That God being conscious to all our Actions, who searches the Thoughts of our Hearts.

Thus far we have treated of the Nature and the Cardinal Precepts, if I may so call them, of the Christian Law. There are others relating to divers Ranks and Orders of Life, which, least

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we run this Chapter into too great a Length, can here but briefly be touch'd upon. In the Christian Republick, as in all others whatever, there are various Degrees and Duties of Men: The Christian Religion provides for all these, according to natural Justice and Equity, in order to promote Peace and Virtue, and the publick Good. Let every one in his Rank and Station so demean himself, as one who believes that he is to give an Account of all his Actions to the Ruler of the Universe. Thus the reciprocal Duties, both of the Civil and Ecclesiastical Magistrates towards the People intrusted to their Care, and of the People towards both sort of Magistrates, are assign'd and appointed; as likewise the Duties of Husband and Wife, of Master and Servant, and of the other Orders of Life, if any such there be. In all these the Christian Religion does not only observe natural Justice, but tempers it with Mercy, and assists and increases it by Love and Benevolence towards all Mankind.

HITHERTO we have treated of the Institutions and Rules of Manners in the Christian Law: You will own now that we have given you a beautiful Idea of a most excellent Law; but then you enquire by what Sanction this Law is esta-

establiſh'd, that it may have its Influence and its Effect? To which I answer, That if you enquire after the Authority of the Legislator, we have treated abundantly of that in the former Chapters: But if you would know what are its Rewards and its Penalties, certainly no greater, no surer can be appointed, than what are promis'd and threaten'd by the Christian Law, viz. eternal Happiness on the one Side, and infernal Torments on the other, than which nothing can be imagin'd more dreadful or more insupportable.

AND Christ often repeats the aforesaid Conditions, and most powerful Sanctions of his Law; and the Apostles very often repeat them: Both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, and all Men whatever, without any Distinction being comprehended, to whom the Promulgation of the Law shall arrive. For upon the Day for solemn Judgment appointed and pre-ordain'd, in the Presence of the holy Angels, and of all Mankind, every Man, shall be tried by this Law for whatever he has said, or thought, or done; and in the Distribution of Rewards and Punishment, the same shall be the Judge who was the Legislator, (*Mat.* xiii. 40, 41, &c. and xvi. 27. and xxv, 31, &c. *Mar.* viii. 38. *Joh.* v. 28, 29.)

And then the Apostles in all Places, and at all Times, loudly proclaim'd this final Judgment, in which Sentence is to be pass'd upon every one according to his Works, for which he is to have his Trial by this Law. (*Acts* xvii. 31. *Rom.* ii. 5, 6, &c. and xiv. 10, 11, 12. *1 Cor.* iii. 13, 14. and *2 Cor.* v. 10. *Gal.* vi. 7, 8. *2 Thes.* i. 6, 7, 8, 9. *2 Tim.* iv. 1, 8. *Heb.* ix. 27, 28. and x. 27. 31. *1 Pet.* i. 17. and *2 Eph.* ii. 4, 9. and iii 7, &c. *Jud.* xiv. 15. *Rev.* vi. 14, 15, &c. and xx. 11, 12, 15. with many others.)

LASTLY, which ought often to be repeated, that our Legislator is provided with Power, sufficient either to make good his Promises, or to inflict his Punishments, is abundantly evident by what he has already done. All that he threaten'd to the *Jews* and the *Jewish* Nation, we have seen fully and severely accomplish'd. And he design'd that Destruction and that Slaughter, to be the Types and the dismal Pledges of that Vengeance which he has determin'd to execute upon the Disobedient at the Destruction of the World. Then as to what respects the Promises of eternal Life, Christ has by manifold Examples demonstrated that he is Lord of Life and Death, which he more especially did,

did, both by raising the Dead to Life, and when he himself arose, victorious over Death, and surrounded with Glory, ascended into the Heaven of Heavens. And he has taught us not only by Words, but by his Example, that he is able to exalt us to the same Heaven to which he is gone before us, to be an Inhabitant there with himself, to cloath us with a Body resembling his own, and to give us Immortality and endless Happiness. Then pouring forth the holy Spirit upon the Apostles and first Christians, he taught us by the stupendous Qualifications with which he inspir'd them, and the amazing Miracles which they wrought, that he was able to perform whatever he had promis'd, and that he would really perform it; giving us this Essay of his Power and his Veracity, and paying down this Part of the Price he had promis'd, as an Earnest and Confirmation of the Agreement he made with us.

THESE Things being weigh'd and establish'd, I can see nothing wanting, and nothing that can hinder us from following and embracing the Christian Law; whether we consider the Matter of it, or the Authority, and the Sanction of it, compleat and absolute in all their Parts; I say, I can see nothing that

can hinder us from following it, and embracing it with all our Hearts, and with all our Souls, with an unshaken Hope, and a universal Obedience, to the utmost of our Power: The Spirit of God co-operating and assisting our hearty Endeavours.

C H A P. VII.

Of the Christian Articles of Faith.

HITHERTO we have treated of the Precepts of the Christian Law, where all Things are clear, without Cloud or Shadow, like the Light of the the Meridian Sun. The Articles of Faith follow; in handling which, if we find in our Way any Thing that is obscure, or hard to be understood, we ought to proceed the more slowly, and, as it were, Step by Step, taking care to tread surely, lest we happen to fall. When the Promulgation of the Gospel began first among the *Jews*, Christ himself and his Apostles every where preaching and proclaiming it, the prime Article, and, as it were, the Initiation into the Christian Faith, was, that *Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah*. But to require that the *Gentiles* should believe this,

this, who had heard little or nothing of the Messiah, had not been right. The Apostles therefore at first preach'd to, and commanded those, that casting off their Idols and their numerous Gods, they should worship one Divinity, and acknowledge Jesus of *Nazareth* as the Prophet whom he had sent; that they should obey his Laws, and believe in his Promises. They who made Profession of this Belief, both orally and cordially were baptiz'd, and admitted into the Congregation of Christians, that is, into the Church. And for some Time the Christian Faith stood upon this Footing, neither the *Jews* being requir'd to renounce their Law, nor the *Gentiles* to profess a plenary Faith, and through all Numbers absolute.

BUT after that the Gospel had made some Progress, and the Number of the Faithful had been increas'd, the Apostles explain'd more fully and openly both to the *Hebrews* and to the *Greeks*, the Heads of the Christian Doctrine; that by their Preaching and Ministry, *the whole Will of God, and his whole Design* might be known, that is, all those Things that were requir'd, and were to be practis'd for the obtaining eternal Life, or all that God would have perform'd by every Man, that he may ar-

Act. xx.
20, 21, 27.
Gal. i. 8.

rive at Salvation according to this new Law. But these Beginnings and Advances of the Doctrine of the Gospel, are to be something more amply explain'd.

Acts xx.
21, 27.
Gal. i. 8.

IN the History of the Gospel 'tis manifest, that what Christ principally requir'd of the *Jews*, was, that they should acknowledge him *to be the promis'd Messiah*. And when they had acknowledged and declared this, they were receiv'd into the Congregation of the Faithful, and were regarded as the Disciples and the Profelytes of Christ. This was the Faith of *Peter*, and this the Declaration of that Faith, when he acknowledg'd Jesus to be the Messiah, and the Son of God, *Mat. xvi. 16*. This was the Faith that *Martha* profess'd, when Christ was about to raise *Lazarus* from the Dead, *Job. xi. 27*. This is the Faith of *Nathanael* and the Apostles, *Job. i. 45, 49*. And this was the Aim, the Design, and the Meaning of the Miracles of Christ, *viz.* that they should prove and declare him to be the Messiah; that they might convince the World into that Belief; and that all the Faithful might have Life eternal by that Belief. This we are expressly taught by St. *John*, Chap. xx. 31. Lastly, Christ himself makes eternal Life to depend

Acts ii. 22.

pend chiefly upon this, *That Men should acknowledge one only true God, and Jesus the Messiah, whom he had sent*, Joh. xvii. 3. By which Words he seems to have had a View both to the *Jews* and the *Gentiles*: To the *Gentiles*, that they should acknowledge one only true God, renouncing all the numerous false Gods whom they worshipped: To the *Jews*, that they should acknowledge Jesus of *Nazareth* to be the true Messiah, the whole Hope of *Israel*, and all the Prophecies being accomplish'd, that had any Relation to the Messiah, even to that Day. And St. Paul afterwards, in his first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, testified and declar'd, that this was the Foundation of the Christian Law, *For other Foundation can no Man lay, than that which is already laid, viz. that Jesus is the Messiah*. 1 Cor. iii. 11.

THESE Things being premis'd, we are to observe that the Divinity of Christ, as far as appears, was not made known, even to the Apostles, before his Resurrection, (*Mar. xvi. 11, 13, 14. Luk. xxiv. 21.*) nor even after his Resurrection and Ascension, before the Descent and Effusion of the Holy Ghost, who was to give Testimony concerning him, and to say more of him than Christ had said

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Luc. xxii.
70, 72.

concerning himself, *Joh. xiv. 26. and xv. 26.* For, indeed, he was to say Things, of which, by reason of their Imbecility, the Apostles were not capable, while Christ was living among them, *Joh. xvi. 12, 13.* I do not remember that Christ ever said openly in the Gospel, that he was God; but St. *Thomas* the Apostle us'd that Appellation in the Hearing of Christ, and was not blam'd for it, *Joh. xx. 28.* And the *Jews* seem, after the same manner, to have understood the Words of Christ, *Joh. v. 18. and x. 30. and the following.* And Christ himself instituted a new Form of Baptism, *In the Name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, *Mat. xxviii. 19.* And commanded, *that all should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father*, *Joh. v. 23.* And said, *that all Things which the Father had were his*, *Chap. xvi. 15.* Certainly Christ (if I may have Leave to use the Expression) had not spoke very modestly concerning himself, nor had heard what others said, when they spoke so, and suffer'd their Error to pass uncorrected, if at the same time he had known himself to be no more than a mere Man: Besides, when Christ wrought his Miracles, he did not, like the Apostles, speak in another's Name, but commandingly,

ingly, absolutely, and like a God. At the Creation, God said, *Let there be Light, and there was Light*: Christ said to the Leper, *I will, be thou clean*, and immediately his Leprosy was cleansed, *Mat. viii. 3.* He said to the Man that was Paralytick, *Arise, take up thy Bed*, *Mat. iv. 39.* and go to thine House, and he went away whole, *Mat. ix. 6.* He said to the Sea, while the Tempest rag'd, *Be silent, be still*, and the Wind was laid, and a great Calm follow'd. *This is above a mortal Voice*, and speaks no less than God; which would be more clearly known to us, from the very Words of Christ, if that Discourse had been transmitted to us, which; Christ, being about to leave the Earth, had with his Apostles after his Resurrection, when, beginning at *Moses*, he is said to have expounded *all that ever the Prophets had said of him*, *Luk. xxiv. 27.* However, the holy Spirit, the Advocate of Christ, had it in Charge, to renew this Exposition in the Minds of the Apostles with new Light, and whatever else Christ spoke in Shadows, or spoke clearly concerning the Messiah; and to make an Addition of all that was necessary to fulfil and accomplish the Christian Doctrine. And therefore we ought very well to consider the Things that

that follow in the Writings of the Apostles, what it was that they preach'd both to the *Jews* and the *Gentiles*; what they requir'd those to believe, who either were already converted, or were to be converted.

IN the Acts of the Apostles, we have the History of the Church in its infant State, the first Lineaments of it, and, as it were, the very vital Principles of the Christian Faith. The Apostles declaring these, added to the usual and fore-mentioned Article, that *Jesus* is the *Messiah*; a second concerning his Resurrection, and the Remission of Sins to repenting Believers; and lastly, a third concerning future Judgment, to be appointed by Christ himself: Nor do I meet with more than these in the Acts of the Apostles. But 'tis easy to run over the Sermons or Speeches which the Apostles made to the People, when they were to be converted to the Christian Faith. The first is that of St. *Peter*, in the second Chapter, where (besides Prophecies, Signs, and Miracles) he brings the Resurrection and the Ascension of Christ, and the Effusion of the Holy Ghost, to testify the Truth of the Christian Religion, *Ver.* 32, 33, 36. And the People being struck and penetrated with what had been said, enquir'd
of

of Peter and the rest, *Men and Bre-* ver. 37.
thren, what shall we do? that is, to
 reconcile God to us, and to obtain Salva-
 tion. To whom *Peter* answer'd, *Re-* ver. 38.
pent, and be baptiz'd, every one of you,
in the Name of Jesus the Messiah, for
the Remission of Sins, and ye shall re-
ceive the Gift of the Holy Ghost. Then
 secondly, *Peter* spoke to the People in Cap. ili.
Solomon's Porch, after he had heal'd the
 Man who had been lame from his Birth,
 and heal'd him with these Words, *In* ver. 6.
the Name of Jesus of Nazareth rise
and walk. When the People beheld
 this Man, whom they all knew, walking
 and leaping in the Temple, they were
 filled with Wonder and Amazement at
 what had happen'd to him. And *Peter*
 laying hold upon that Occasion, thus
 spoke to the People, *Ye Men of Israel,* ver. 12, 13.
why marvel ye at this? Or why look ye
so earnestly on us, as though by our
Power or Holiness, we had made this
Man to walk? The God of Abraham, of
Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our
Fathers, hath glorified his Son Je-
sus, whom ye deliver'd up, and denied,
 &c. And then he goes on (Ver. 22.)
For Moses truly said unto your Fa-
thers, A Prophet shall the Lord your
God raise up unto you, of your Bre-
thren, like unto me, him shall ye hear in
 all

all Things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every Soul who will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the People. He celebrates Christ the Prophet, who had been promis'd through every Age, though no one hitherto had made mention of his Divinity.

Cap. iv. 7. NOR did the Commotion stop here: For the Matter being brought to the Priests and the Rulers of the People, they thus examin'd the Apostles, *By what Power, or in whose Name, have you done this? Peter answer'd, Be it known*

ver. 10. *unto you all, and to all the People of Israel, that by the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, and whom God raised from the Dead, even by him doth this Man stand here before you whole. Neither is there Salvation in any other. For there is no other*

ver. 12. *Name given on Earth, whereby we must be saved. All these Things relate to Jesus the Messiah; and likewise*

Chap. vii. 37. *Stephen the first Martyr, declar'd that Jesus was the Prophet who was expected; and St. Paul, being newly converted, taught in the Synagogues of Damascus, that Jesus was the Son of God, and the very Messiah.*

ix. 20, 22. Chap. xiii. THUS far concerning the *Jews*: From whom St. Paul and Barnabas went to the

the *Gentiles*; and *St. Paul* at *Antioch* (in *Pisidia*) preaches the Gospel both to the *Gentiles* and to the dispers'd *Jews*, viz. that *Jesus* the Saviour was risen from the Dead; and that they who believ'd in his Name should have Remission of Sins. Afterwards, when *St. Paul* and *Barnaby* disagreed, the former chose *Silas* for his Associate: And when they were falsely accus'd of Sedition at *Philippi*, they are thrown into Prison. The Goaler thrust them into the inner Prison, and made their Feet fast in the Stocks: But at Midnight the Foundations of the Prison were shaken by an Earthquake, the Doors thrown open, and the Bonds of *Paul* and *Silas* loosen'd: Upon which the Keeper of the Prison being waken'd, and terrified, fell down at their Feet, and cried, *Sirs, what must I do to be saved?* And they said, *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy House.* And into that Faith they were baptized.

AFTER this, *St. Paul* at *Thessalonica*, taught in the Synagogues, that *Jesus* is the Messiah, and that it was expedient for him to die, and to rise from the Dead. And afterwards at *Athens*, he was call'd by the Philosophers, a *Settler-forth of strange Gods, because he preach'd*

to

to them *Jesus and the Resurrection*. But when he preach'd to the *Athenians* in the Midst of the *Areopagy*, he here, as before at *Lystra*, directed his Discourse chiefly against Idolatry, exhorting them powerfully, that they should worship one, the most high God, the Lord of Heaven and Earth. When concluding, he said, *That God had appointed a Day, in which he will judge the World in Righteousness; by that Man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given Assurance unto all Men, in that he hath raised him from the Dead; where 'tis manifest that he means Jesus.*

ver. 31.

Chap. xviii.

FROM *Athens* St. Paul went to *Corinth*, where he fervently asserted in the Synagogues, that Jesus was Christ, or the Messiah. And when they oppos'd him, and blasphem'd, looking with Indignation upon their Obstinacy, and shaking off the Dust from his Feet and his Garments (as he had done before at *Antioch*, Chap. xiii. 31.) he said, *Your Blood be upon your own Heads, I am clean: From henceforth I will go to the Gentiles.* The Apostle appeals to the Presbyters of *Ephesus*, whom he had sent for to *Miletus*, as Witnesses of his Zeal, and his Diligence in propagating the Faith: For that he had preach'd both to the *Jews and to the Gentiles,*
that

Chap. xx.

17, 21.

Chap. xxiv.

24.

that they should be converted to God and to the Faith, which is in the Lord Jesus the Messiah. Then professing the same Faith in Christ, and the last Judgment, before *Fælix*, he was sent to King *Agrippa*; to whom being present, and presiding, after that *St. Paul* had given an Account of his Life and his Authority, he adds, *Having obtained Help of* Chap. xxvii.
God, I continue to this Day, witness- 22, 23.
ing both to small and great, saying no other Things, than those which the Prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the Dead, and should shew Light to this People, and to the Gentiles.

LASTLY, at *Rome*, where he afterwards died, in a solemn Assembly of *Acts xxviii.*
the *Jews*, he expounded *Moses* and the 23, 30, 31.
Prophets, as so many Witnesses, that *Jesus* was the Messiah; and there for the Space of two Years he taught the Things that relate to the Kingdom of God, and to the Lord *Jesus the Messiah*; and there at last he seal'd them with his Blood.

HITHERTO we have given a short Account of the Heads of the Christian Faith, which we find in the Acts of the Apostles; which indeed are the principle,

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ple, and which are comprehensive of the whole Christian OEconomy. You see that besides one God, the Apostles preach'd chiefly that Jesus was the Messiah, and that the Holy Ghost was sent by God: And they confirm'd by repeated Testimonies, that the same Jesus was risen from the Dead, and was ascended into Heaven. Lastly, they preach'd the Remission of Sins, the Resurrection of the Body, the last Judgment, and eternal Life, to be appointed, granted, and accomplish'd in the same sacred Name. If you compare these Heads with what we call the Apostles Creed, they seem to me to comprehend all the Articles that are primæval and unquestionable; for what is there inserted of the Descent of Christ into Hell, of the Catholick Church, and the Communion of Saints, is the Addition of a later Age, and of a more doubtful Explanation; but all the rest are apparent here. And therefore to the foremention'd Times in which the Acts of the Apostles ended, it does not appear (let the Antiquity or Authority of that Creed be what it will) that any Articles or Heads of the Christian Faith, besides those which we have mention'd, were publicly and openly propos'd either to the *Jews* or the *Gentiles*; I say openly or plainly propos'd: But in the

the mean Time they ador'd Jesus Christ in their daily Worship, and baptiz'd and wrought Miracles in his Name. Lastly, *Stephen*, when dying, call'd upon Jesus Christ, and yielded up his Soul into his Hands, *Acts* vii. 59. *

BUT if the Apostles, in their first Sermons to the People, made mention

* What the Mother and Apostolical Churches taught, *Tertullian* enumerates in a few Words, *de Praescript.* c. 16. one God, &c. Then, *de Veland, Virg.* c. 1. he gives a clearer Account of the Rule of Faith. *The Rule of Faith is altogether one, and is alone unalterable, and never to be reform'd, viz. of believing in one God Almighty, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, and in his Son Jesus Christ, who was born of the Virgin Mary, and was crucified under Pontius Pilate, who rose again from the Dead on the third Day, who was taken up into Heaven, and is now sitting at the Right Hand of the Father, and who will come to judge the Living and the Dead by the Resurrection of the Body. This Law of Faith remaining, the rest are Matters of Discipline and Conversation, and admit of the Novelty of Correction, the Grace of God still working with us, and assisting us even to the End.* Before *Tertullian*, *Irenaeus* had mark'd out the same Articles of Faith, l. 1. c. 2. For the Church was sown and spread through the whole Globe, even to the Ends of the Earth, and receiv'd that Faith from the Apostles and their Disciples, which is one God, the Father Omnipotent, &c. As here we find none of the doubtful Articles of the Creed, so we see that the first Christians were contented with a few, and with a Simplicity of Belief. Till in order to oppose Heresies, which were risen, or were to arise, new and fuller Explanations were admitted as so many Remedies. Till at last, Superstition prevailing, and Pontifical Tyranny, new Articles were forg'd, which are no where to be found in the sacred Writings of the first Fathers; and which were impos'd and forc'd upon Mankind by the Sanction of Fines and horrible Penalties. See *St. Hilar. lib. de Synodis*, and *Dr. Taylor's Dissuas. par. 2. p. 4. in fol. 441.*

more cautiously, and less explicitly of the Divinity of Christ, that, if there be here any room for Conjectures, was done with a Design, least any Appearance or Suspicion of Polytheism should offend the *Jews*. 'Tis very probable that the vulgar *Jews* did not believe that the Messiah, whom they expected, would be God. And therefore when they believ'd that he affirm'd himself to be God, they were of Opinion, that as a Blasphemer he ought to be ston'd to Death, *Joh. x. 30, 31, 33.* And 'tis as probable that that Prejudice, and that Silence, gave Occasion to the *Ebionites*, the *Nazarenes*, and other Judaifying Sectaries of the first Age, of Christianity, to deny the Divinity of Christ, tho' they acknowledg'd him to be the Messiah. Thus much for the *Jews*. As for what concerns the *Gentiles*, who were to be brought over from Polytheism to the Worship of one God, it was probably not thought seasonable to propose to them, at their very first Entrance, the Mystery of a God with three Persons, every one of which was God, least they should entertain an Opinion that they had only fallen upon a new Kind of Polytheism. There was a Necessity then for expecting, till the Time should come when the Minds of the Disciples being pre-

*Joh. v. 18.
& viii. 58,
59.*

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prepar'd and confirm'd, all Things should be declar'd to all Men openly, and directly; which we read was afterwards done in the Apostolick Epistles, and in the Gospel of St. *John*.^{*} But these Things by the by: Let us proceed to what we design'd.

THE Acts of the Apostles are concluded by the Arrival of St. *Paul* at *Rome*. And 'tis believ'd that he arriv'd there something less than sixty Years after the Birth of Christ. The Gospel of St. *John* had not been yet made publick, nor the rest of his Writings, nor several of St. *Paul*'s Epistles. It remains then that we make a diligent Enquiry, whether there are any other Articles publish'd in those, or in any of the Apostolick Writings. St. *John* seems chiefly to have writ his Gospel, with a Design to proclaim the Divinity of Christ. In the very Beginning of it, he declares the Pre-existence of the *Word*, that the *Joh. i. 1,* Word was God, and the Creator of the ^{2, 3.} Universe. Where 'tis evident that the

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* *Chrysost. in Psal. cix.* But if *Moses* said, the Lord thy God is one Lord, your Weakness was the Cause of it. And what Wonder, if this was done in Articles of Faith, when even in Things themselves, God brought down his Discourse from those, which are more to those which are less perfect, descending to the Level of our little Capacities?

ver. 14.
Apoc. xix.
13.

Evangelist speaks of the Person of Christ, when he declares below, that the same Word was incarnate and visible to Mankind. But they who wrest all this, to signify only an Evangelical Epoch, and only a metaphorical and moral Creation, seek for an Evasion which can have neither Force nor Probability with Men of ingenuous Tempers; (*for that Christ existed in the Beginning of the Christian Religion*, has nothing either smart or judicious in it, and is a Proposition without any sensible Meaning;) especially when what is said concerning Christ by the same Apostle in his Epistles, agrees with this, and is exactly of a Piece with it, 1 *Joh.* i. 1, 2, 3. And where, in his Apocalypse, he often makes mention of him as God, as *Alpha* and *Omega*, to be invoked and ador'd, *Chap.* i. 1, 2, 3. and *ver.* 7, 20. and *Chap.* xxi. 3, 6, 7. *Chap.* iv. and v. which is confirm'd by several other Places of Scripture; and which compare with *Isa.* xli. 4. and xliv. 6.

WE meet with several Things in St. Paul's Epistles, and Arguments, and Proofs of several Kinds, by which the Divinity of Christ, may be made known to us. 'Tis said by St. *John*, that all Things were made or created, ἀπὸ τοῦ Λόγου, by the Word. St. Paul, in his Epistles,

cles, attributes, no less than St. *John*, the Creation of all Things to Christ. But says to the *Hebrews*, (*Chap. iii. 4.*) *that he who made all Things is God*; whence it necessarily follows, that the same Christ was believ'd by St. *Paul* to be God. I said that the universal Creation was ascrib'd to Christ, and in solemn Words consecrated by the same Apostle, *Heb. i. 3, 10.* and in the fullest Manner in his Epistle to the *Colossians*, *Chap. i. 16, 17.* in these Terms, *By him, speaking of Christ, were all Things created, that are in Heaven, and that are in Earth, visible and invisible, whether they be Thrones or Dominions, or Principalities, or Powers; all Things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all Things, and in him all Things consist.* Here the Apostle asserts, that both the Celestial and Terrestrial, the Corporeal and Intellectual World, were created by Christ. Nor could the Things be in a fuller Manner enumerated. Now here can be no room for a metaphorical Creation or Renovation by the Gospel; since this Series of Things comprehends several Orders of Beings that are superior to Men, comprehends all the Angels, of whatever Degree, that have persisted in their Innocence and their Obedience. Besides, in

Isa. xlii. 5.
& xlii. 24.
Jer. x. 11,
12.
A&C. vii.
50.
& xvii.
24.

the sacred Writings, as well of the Prophets as of the Apostles, this is regarded as the singular Character of the true and most high God, that he created the Heaven and Earth, and all Things that are in either; and 'tis by this Character that he is distinguish'd from the fictitious or minor Gods. Nor can his Character be otherwise explain'd, unless 'tis wrested and forc'd. Besides, 'tis probable that so many Orders and Degrees of Beings are here enumerated, in order to obviate the little Objections and Cavils of all such Hereticks, as in their own Imaginations created other Creators of the World. Besides, *St. John* agrees with this Discourse of *St. Paul*, (as they are wont upon this Argument, to confirm each other) and corroborates it, when he expressly attributes the Title *παντοκράτωρ*, that is, of Almighty to Christ, *Apoc. i. 8*. For there, by a just Interpretation of the true Words, *παντοκράτωρ* is to be referr'd to Christ; because the first Part of the Verse relates to Christ, as from other Places of the same Book is manifest; (as from Verse the 11th and 18th of the same Chapter, and the 8th Verse of Chap. the second, and the 13th of Chap. the twenty-second,) besides, what immediately preceded the Verse, manifestly related to Christ. Lastly, the very Word

Word κύριος, Lord, in the New Covenant almost always designs Christ. * And by the same Title is the Power ascrib'd to him, both of raising the Dead, and of subduing all Things unto himself, Phil. iii. 20. and 1 Cor. viii. 6. *There is but one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all Things.*

BUT besides the Power of Christ, by which alone his Divinity is conspicuous; the Apostle St. Paul says such Things of his Person, as cannot be attributed to any created Beings. For Christ is said by him, *to be the Brightness of his Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person:* Neither Human nor Angelick Nature, let it be never so much exalted, can come up to these Titles which are truly divine: Titles which are neither acquir'd, nor conferr'd from without, but native, and together begotten with

Heb. i. 3.

* The Septuagint (whose Expressions, for the most part, the Style of the New Testament follows) use the Word κύριος in the Room of the Word *Jehovah*: And indeed the Name of *Jehovah* is more than once given to the Messiah, and is explain'd by the Evangelists of the same, *Isa.* viii. 14. *Jer.* xxiii. 6. *Zach.* x. 14. compare *Isa.* xl. 3. with *Mat.* iii. 3. and *Malac.* i. 3. with *Mat.* xi. 12. and *Luk.* i. 76. Besides they who deny that Christ is to be invoc'd and ador'd, are refuted by several Passages and Examples of sacred Scripture, besides those which we mention'd, *Acts* vii. 50. and ix. 14, 21. *Rom.* x. 12, 13. 1 *Cor.* i. 2. *Phil.* ii. 9, 10. 11. *Heb.* i. 6.

with him by a necessary Emanation, as Light proceeds from the Sun : For Christ is affirm'd by him to have existed in his Form Divine, before his Incarnation, or his Humiliation, *Phil. ii. 6.* where, though we meet with some Expressions and Phrases, that are of a more doubtful Interpretation, yet this they certainly signify, that Christ existed, even in his Form Divine, before his Descent into his mortal Body. Lastly, the same Apostle, in the second Chapter to the *Colossians*, ver. 9. affirms, *That in Christ dwelt all the Fulness of the Godhead BODILY*: Not only in Shadows or Figures, or Representations, nor assumptively, or transitorily, but *vitally*, as the Soul inhabits the Body.

NOR is it of small or of light Account, that from the Times of the Apostles, as far as it appears, this Doctrine concerning the Divinity of Christ, was an Article of the Christian Church; and that the contrary Opinion was always esteem'd erroneous or heretical: For though I am far from attributing Infallibility to the Church, or to general Councils, yet, upon a strict Enquiry into Articles of Faith, there is some Satisfaction in consulting the Witnesses of Antiquity, and seeing what was constantly the Tenet of the primitive Church, and what

what it never heard of, or never approv'd of. For that which was esteem'd to be found Doctrine in the Beginning of the Christian Religion; that which its Fathers and its Prelates taught, as well collectively in Councils, as separately in their Writings; that with equitable Judges, will always have its Weight in the Decision of Controversies, as long as Canonical Scripture is not against it.

BUT to return to the Fountain: Since these Things are so, we are oblig'd to believe and to profess, according to the Light which God has vouchsafed to communicate to us by the Gospel, *that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, and that the same is God.* But if we err in believing this, 'tis so far from being a voluntary, that 'tis an unavoidable Error: For we follow, as far as we are able, the Guides and the Leaders whom God has given us, the Apostles St. *John* and St. *Paul*. God has commanded us, by a Voice from Heaven, that we should hearken to Christ: Christ has commanded us to hearken to his Apostles, *Mat. x.* ^{Joh. xx. 21.} *40. and xxviii. 20.* St. *John* was the beloved Disciple of Christ; St. *Paul* receiv'd his Vocation, his Apostleship, and his Divine Authority from Christ, after his Ascension, and confirm'd them by repeated Miracles. 'Tis to these sacred

cred Authorities that we assent; 'tis to these that we adhere, interpreting their Meaning, according to the native Force, and the receiv'd Use of their Words. Nor has Christ, or the foremention'd Authors, ever admonish'd us, that those sacred Oracles were writ in a different Style from all other Writers, or were to be interpreted after a different Manner. Lastly, we must observe, that in the Things which are known to us only by Revelation, of which Kind are those of which we are now treating, we ought to follow the Authority of the Teacher, and not the Light of Nature. Nor is it just in a Subject of infinite Weight, such as is the Divine Nature, to esteem Reason a proper and every way a competent Judge, especially at the Time that we are making Enquiries into the Arcana of that Nature, *the Modes of Distinction and Unity*, which we can neither really comprehend nor define by our own Ability. Therefore, in handling and examining these, we ought to use the greatest Modesty and Moderation, as well by reason of our own Incapacity, as the abundant Excellency of the Subject under our Consideration.

THUS have we briefly treated of the Divinity of Christ, according to the sacred Writings. The same Writings declare

clare and exprefs in the cleareft Manner his Incarnation, that is, the Incarnation of the fame *Word*, the only-begotten Son of God, *Chap.* i. 14. which was often repeated by him and the other Apoftles, 1 *Joh.* iv. 2, 3. and 2 *Epist.* ver. 7. 1 *Tim.* iii. 16. *Heb.* ii. 9, &c. then *Rom.* viii. 3. and ix. 5. *Gal.* iv. 4. *Col.* i. 21, 22. And it appears in a great many other Places, both by Expreffions and Actions, that Chrift took upon him the Affections and Infirmities of our Nature. Nor is there any Thing, if you confult even Reason, that can hinder the Divine Nature from being united to a human Soul, and by the Mediation of that to our Flefh. There is nothing, I fay, in Reason, that can hinder us from believing this, fince we find, moft apparently in our felves, that an immaterial Subftance can be united to our Bodies: But they who ftretch this facred Union to that Degree, as to draw from it a thorough real *Communication of Idioms* (for thus they are wont to exprefs themfelves) between the Divine Nature and the Human Nature affum'd, not only incumber and perplex the Doctrine of the Incarnation, in itfelf plain, with many insignificant Subtleties, but utter grievous and dangerous Things concerning God and the Divine Nature. Nor
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do they sufficiently understand, or sufficiently explain, what the Union of a corporeal and an incorporeal Substance is, or in what it consists; but if there are in the sacred Writings some Expressions relating to this Matter, that are either too strong, or too hard, they are not to be wrested to the worst Sense, but rather to be soften'd by a sound Interpretation. 'Tis a noted Rule for the Interpretation of Scripture, that the Things which are spoke according to human Passion, are to be understood according to Divine Dignity; and that the Things which are express'd figuratively, are to be interpreted reasonably; that we may not rashly be guilty of embroiling the Natures of Things, or making some Parts of Scripture contradict several others. In short, there are several Niceties and Subtleties of the learned School-Men, about this Doctrine of the Incarnation, which I am willing to pass over, as being not at all necessary to the Faith of a Christian.

THUS far concerning the Divinity of Christ, and the Incarnation of the *Word*, according to the sacred Oracles, in which likewise the Holy Ghost is join'd with Christ, and represented to us as a singular, distinct, and divine Person, *Mat.* iii. 16, 17. and xxviii. 19. and *Joh.* xiv.

16. and xv. 26. 1 Cor. xii. 4, 5, 6. 2 Cor. xiii. 14. 1 Pet. i. 2. 1 Joh. v. 7. Besides, Perfections peculiar to God, are attributed to that Person so mark'd and distinguish'd. The Holy Ghost, by its Omnipresence, dwells in all the Faithful, wherever they are dispers'd, 1 Cor. iii. 16. and vi. 19. Rom. viii. 26. 1 Pet. iv. 14. And by the same Spirit we are regenerated, sanctified, illuminated, Joh. iii. 5. Tit. iii. 5, 6. Joh. xvi. 13. He searches and knows all Things, as well the Hearts of Men, as *the deep Things of God*, 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11. The same Deity mov'd and inspir'd the Prophets of old, as afterwards he did the Apostles, 2 Pet. i. 21. Heb. i. Lastly, he is celebrated together with the Father and the Son, as well in the Form of Baptism prescrib'd by Christ, as in the Apostolical Benedictions and Doxologies. Therefore when the Holy Ghost is represented to us in the sacred Writings, under the *Habit* and Character, not of a Quality or a Virtue, but of a Being actually existing; when personal Qualities are attributed to him distinct from the Father and the Son; when lastly, those Actions, Virtues, and Effects are of that Nature, that they surpass and transcend all created Power: Induced by these Arguments we believe that the Holy Ghost, represent-

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ed under this Idea, is to be worshipped and glorified, together with the Father and the Son.

Joh. xvi.
12.

1f. xxviii.
9.
1 Cor. iii.
2.

Heb. v. 12.

THAT at Length we may conclude this Chapter concerning the primary Articles of the Christian Doctrine, we must observe, that the Apostles, with whom the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and the expounding of this new Revelation were intrusted, open'd some of their Instructions sooner, and some of them later; and that more or less fully and openly, according to the Difference of Times, Things, and Persons. As Christ said to his Apostles, *I have many Things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now.* In like Manner the Apostles might have said, both to *Jews* and *Gentiles*; we do not declare all Things together to you, or all Things at one Time: But as you are either Infants, or grown up, as you are to be nourish'd either with Milk, or with solid Food, so we supply you more or less, according to every one's Want or Capacity, as well with Instructions for Life and Manners, as for Belief and Doctrine. The *Judaick* Law, and the Superstition of the *Gentiles* were by Degrees abolish'd, and the Christian Law was by Degrees establish'd. It was not struck and brought to Perfection at a Heat, or while

while its first Legislator was on Earth, like the Law of *Moses*; but plain and simple in the Beginning, and contented with a little; like a springing Flower, it unfolded it self by Degrees. What the Apostles determin'd in their Meeting at *Jerusalem*, concerning the Practice of the Christians of those Times, had, in some measure, Place too concerning their Faith. *It seems good, say they, to the Holy Ghost and to us, to lay no other Burden upon you, than these that are necessary.* That, I say, might have Place in some of the Mysteries of Doctrine, as Things that in Process of Time would be more seasonably deliver'd, when the first Seeds had shot their Roots deeper, that is, the primary Points of this Divine Religion. Times, Conjunctions, and the Manners of Men, ought always to be had in Consideration by those who endeavour to bring about great Revolutions for the Benefit of Mankind. But when at length the Gospel and the Canon of the sacred Writings were sign'd and seal'd by the Apostles, nothing further ought to be added, and nothing ought to be diminish'd, with regard to the Christian Faith.

C H A P. VIII.

Of the secondary Articles in the Christian Doctrine, by divers, diversly explain'd.

HITHERTO we have briefly laid before you the primary and original Articles of the Christian Faith: But you will say; perhaps, if the Simplicity of the Christian Doctrine is as great as is here pretended, why are so many Books, so many bulky Volumes, accumulated to explain this very Doctrine? Besides, why so much Discord, so much Debate, so many various Sects, which tear in Pieces the Christian World, and distract it into opposite Parties, to each other most deadly Enemies. From whence can so much Dissention arise about a plain, a simple, and, above all Things, a pacifick Doctrine? The Apostle formerly ask'd the Christians, *From*
 Jam. iv. 1. *whence come Wars and Fightings among you.* And he answers himself by another Question, which is equivalent to an Affirmative, *Is it not from your Lusts?* Yes, see here the Original of all this Mischief, the Root from which so many

many bitter Branches spring. The Tempers of Men, and their Ways of Thinking are different, and some Dissentions arise from thence: But these are light and harmless, unless inflam'd by Passion. 'Tis from wicked Affections, the Desires after Riches and Honours, and the Lust of Power, that intestine Hatreds and implacable Angers proceed, and are fermented. The Ears are deaf to the gentle Voice of Reason, as soon as they are stopp'd by that Filth, and are stunn'd by the Noise of worldly Affairs. Besides, your *Polemick*, or warlike Divines, as they are call'd, lay too great a Burden, by their secondary Articles on the Christian Faith, which is it self so plain, and satisfied with so very few. And 'tis chiefly from these, while each of them obstinately holds and defends his own Opinions, and makes it his Business to get them inroll'd in the Lists of Articles of Faith, that so great a Multitude of Controversies arises.

I call those secondary Articles, which are found in no antient Creed; which yet we are oblig'd so far to embrace, as they can be prov'd by Scripture or right Reason: In which secondary Articles Men are wont to dispute, not so much concerning the Things themselves, as the Moods and Explications of them.

There are many of these that regard original Sin, Justification, Satisfaction, and other Things which will be mention'd below; among which, as some of them are indubitable, there are others which may be canvass'd either in the Affirmative or the Negative, without any Violation of Friendship or Religion.

THAT I may begin at the Head, and treat the rest in the most convenient Order, I shall first speak concerning original Sin. 'Tis very certain that the Minds of Men are degenerated, and that ever since the Original of our World; and for that Reason obnoxious to Wrath divine: But they who, besides the Stain inherent in us, whether in our Bodies, or in our Souls, attribute that singular Sin of the first Man to his Posterity, who were then unborn, are certainly oblig'd to explain both their Notions of Sin, and their Notions of Divine Justice, after such a Manner as may support that wonderful Doctrine. For Sin, as far as we are capable of conceiving it, is an Act of him who sins, and not of another Person who contributes nothing to that Action, and much less of one, who, when the Sin is committed, is not born. Every Action, whether good or bad, proves the Existence of the Agent; for there are neither

ther Actions nor Affections of a Non-existent. And whereas it is rightly said, *I think, I doubt, therefore I exist*: So 'tis no less truly said, *I sin, I offend God, therefore I am*. There is the same Consequence, and no less clear and invincible for one, than there is for the other. Besides, if we come to divide Sin; all Sin is plac'd either in some Thought, or in the Words or Actions. But he who does not exist, can neither have good nor evil Thoughts, nor can in any wise speak or act: He is therefore, if I may so express my self, incapable and insusceptible of Sin. Lastly, there is no Transgression without Law; nor Rom. iv. 15. and x. 14. is any Law obligatory that is not known. But Infants, or those who are 1 Joh. iii. not born, have no Knowledge of Law, ⁴ either natural or positive, (and that by invincible Ignorance,) therefore they can sin against neither. Besides, all Sin is voluntary: But the Posterity of *Adam* neither will'd the Commission of his Sin, nor approv'd of it when committed.

THESE Things appear to me to be clear and perspicuous, and demonstrative in their Kind: But you will say, perhaps, these Things are undeniable Truths, provided they are understood of Sin that is strictly and properly call'd so: But then there is another sort of Sin that a-

rises from *Imputation* only, and may be call'd imputative Sin: Then in this kind of Sin, a Man may be, or be accounted guilty, and suffer Punishment for a Fault which another commits. Why truly I do not deny, but that an innocent Person may be pronounc'd guilty by an unjust Judge, and may suffer Punishment from a powerful Master. But tho' that may be done, yet it makes no Alteration in the Nature of Just and Unjust; and therefore it cannot be done by a just Master and Judge, and much less by God, who is infinitely great and good: I say, that by God it cannot be done, by reason of his Perfection and Holiness: For this would entirely destroy and deface the Idea of Divine Justice, would destroy the Distinction between Just and Unjust, and the very Form and Essence of Sin. The Design of punitive Justice requires, that he who suffers the Punishment, should be guilty of the Crime; guilty, I say, either as Principal, or as Accessary, that is, as one, who by his Assistance, or his Advice, or his Consent, has been in some Measure the Cause of the criminal Action, or was conscious, at least, to the doing it, or to the Crime after it was committed. But he who was not yet born, could do nothing, could contribute

bute nothing of all this, to the Sin of *Adam*, or of any other whatever. And therefore according to the Laws of Justice and Equity, he ought not to be punish'd for *Adam's* Crime, of which he was entirely innocent, and unknowing. If you would have this Thing made clearer by Example, I say, that *Peter*, who was born four thousand Years after the Fall of *Adam*, was not guilty of *Adam's* Crime ; which thus I prove : He who contributed nothing to the Crime of *Adam*, neither by his Will, nor by his Understanding, nor by any internal Motion, nor by any Faculty of human Mind, could not be guilty of that Crime ; but *Peter* contributed nothing of all this to it ; therefore he could not be guilty of that Crime. Number up as many Kinds of Obligations or Causes of Guilt as you please, *Peter* was guiltless of them all. He was neither guilty of promising, nor contracting, nor suborning, nor receiving, nor conspiring, nor being conscious, and concealing : By what Law then, by what Right, will you transfer, or will you impute *Adam's* Fault to *Peter* ? You may by the same, or by equal Right, transfer it to the Angel *Gabriel*, or to any other innocent Person.

BUT you will answer, perhaps, that *Adam* was the common Parent of Mankind, and that for that Reason his Posterity is involv'd in the same Guilt with himself. A harsh, indeed, and a hard Sentence! which overthrows or supercedes all the foremention'd Accounts of Justice. But let us see the Foundation of this pretended Cause. If *Adam* has involved us with himself in his own Crime, he either did that by Reason of Paternity only, or by Obligation of Contract or Stipulation, common to us with him. Now we neither read that *Adam* enter'd into Contract, nor do we remember, or are conscious that such a Contract was enter'd into by us. Now to make a legitimate Contract, the Parties must consent that are bound by the Force of it. As for what respects Paternity, *Noah* was equally with *Adam* our common Father: And yet neither his Drunkenness, or any other Crime that he may have committed, is imputed to his Posterity. Nor does the better Part of us, the Soul, which alone can offend, and alone can be sensible of Punishment, descend to us by Propagation. 'Tis not deriv'd from *Adam*, but from God, the Father of Spirits. Now by this Law, which you pretend to set up, this Law of Descent and Family, every

every Man would be involv'd in the Sins of his Father, or his Grandfather, or his great Grandfather; and the greater the Proximity was of Blood, the more strongly should he be bound, and the more should we be liable to suffer for his Offences: But that every one should bear his own Burden, and receive the Recompence that is due to what he himself has done, is a Law that is worthy of a just Legislator, and of God, the justest of Judges, (*Exod. xxxii. 32, 33. Deut. xxiv. 16. Ezek. xviii. 20. Gal. vi. 5. 1 Cor. iii. 8.*) and 'tis by this Judgment that we must stand or fall.

THE last Argument that I can think of, in Behalf of original Sin, remains. They urge, that 'tis not a Thing unheard of in human Laws, that the Son should suffer for the Crimes which the Father commits, which, in Cases of Treason, is customary in several Nations. I grant it; but the Reason on both Sides is not equal, with respect either to the Punishments, or to the Legislators. There is sometimes a Necessity in human Affairs, to establish Laws which are not absolutely the best, nor altogether unblamable, but the most commodious, with regard to Time or Place, or the State of Affairs; Laws that may be advantageous to the Publick, though perhaps they

they may appear something unjust, with regard to two or three private Persons, Nor, if you consider the Condition which the World is in, can this Inconvenience be entirely avoided. The publick Good is to be preferr'd to a private one, and of several Evils the least is to be chosen. But the great Legislator lay under no such Necessity. If Mankind had retain'd their Integrity, there had been no Occasion for Punishments. But if God foresaw that the first Race of Men would fall, there was so much the more Reason for the taking care of Posterity, that the innocent Offspring might not suffer for the Offences of their guilty Ancestors. Then as to what relates to the Punishment, 'tis not in this Case private and singular, such as is appointed by the foresaid human Laws, but 'tis a publick and universal Evil ; it does not fall upon this or that Family, or Tribe, or Nation, but all Mankind is involv'd in it. This Example, and this Severity, that is never to be used again, can benefit or terrify none, since no Part is free, no Part remains unpunish'd. Besides, there is no Proportion in the Greatness and Terribleness of the Punishments. How little is that which we suffer from human Laws ? the Loss of Patrimony, of Land, or of Goods. No Son can lose
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his Life for his Father's Crime, let that Crime be never so great: But the Punishment, that is the Consequence of imputing *Adam's* Crime to his Offspring, reaches both the present Life, and extends to that to come, and threatens both temporal and eternal Death. There is nothing greater, nothing more terrible than these in any Kind, in any Degree of Punishment; and therefore in this Comparison there is no Parity of Arguments, or of Reasons.

BUT, say the Papists, what do you complain of? Original Justice was not natural to *Adam*, but a supernatural Gift: And therefore there is no Injustice done to the Posterity of *Adam*, if a Virtue that was given to him gratuitously, does not descend to them, when he had so ill deserv'd it. But, first, we deny that that Justice was supernatural: Rectitude and Integrity of Nature, seem in Justice and Equity to be due to every reasonable Creature in its Original, when first it comes pure and undefiled from the Hands of its Maker, that it may be fit and qualified to attain the End peculiar to it. But the End peculiar to a reasonable and immortal Nature, is eternal Happiness: Therefore unless every Soul is originally furnish'd with such Endowments, and establish'd in such a
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Condition, that it may entertain a greater Hope of obtaining eternal Felicity, than Fear of being doom'd to everlasting Torments, I cannot discern how the Goodness or Wisdom of the Creator can shine in the Contrivance of such a Creature. Besides, if you believe it just that we should be depriv'd of these original Gifts on the Account of another's Sin, it certainly appears to be far from just, that any one should be damn'd for another's Sin; or that we should be reduced to such an impotent State, that it should be neither in our Power to will nor to practise what is good; or lastly, that we should be overwhelm'd and oppress'd with innumerable Inconveniences and Calamities, both external and internal, both of Body and Mind, and Fortune. For from hence, they cry, proceed the Ignorance and ill Affections of the Mind, the Indispositions and Diseases of the Body, the threatening Countenance of external Nature, the Inclemency of Heaven, the Sterility of Earth, the laborious Acquisition of Things that are necessary to Life: So that in our present Condition, 'tis difficult to live at all; and to live happily, 'tis impossible.

THUS you see, that by Reason of *Adam's* Transgression, we are not only depriv'd of extraordinary Gifts, but even
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of those ordinary Endowments, which, according to an equitable Constitution of Things, are due to human Nature. We are driven into a preternatural State, or a State that is against Nature, and are laden with many and dire Calamities, on account of another's Fault. And now let *Adam*, wherever he is, be inform'd, into what a wretched Condition he has brought all Nature, and all human Kind: How many Complaints are pour'd against him from the Mouths of miserable Mortals? That 'tis Mankind's universal Cry, Thou art the Author of all our Calamities, when we have done nothing to deserve them. Nature cries out that she is subjected to Vanity, in spite of all her Reluctancy. Lastly, the miserable Infants cry out from Hell, Thou hast been a cruel Father to us: We suffer these Torments, not for our own, but for thy Transgression: We were born, and thrust into the Light without our Knowledge, and forced to leave it against our Wills. We have done neither Good nor Evil, and yet here we languish in utter Darkness, far from God and the Light of Heaven, or are scorch'd in raging Fires; yet our only Fault is, that we were born, that we were thy Offspring: Oh cruel Father of wretched Infants! Christ embraced us within his Mar.x. 16.
Arms,

Arms, and call'd us the peculiar Care of Angels, and said, that the Kingdom of Heaven was compos'd of those who resemble us, (*Mat. xviii. 3. and xix. 14.*) but thou, on the contrary, drivest our Angels from us, (as formerly they drove thee out of Paradise,) and thrusts us among Devils, to constitute a Kingdom, not of Heaven, but of Hell. We are call'd indeed Innocents, both by the People, and by the Prophets; but are we treated as Innocents? What Evil or Sin is, we never knew. What Torment is, to too wretched Little-ones, alas! too well we know. Nor is there room for Repentance, or ever was for us, who expir'd Infants; Repentance, by which all other Sinners obtain Remission of Sins.

Vid. *Mat. xviii. 6. de Saxo Molari, &c.*

ADAM being conscious to himself of having done so much Mischief; of having brought so much Misery, so great Pollution and Curse upon all his Race, that is, upon all Human kind, and being continually loaded with so many Reproaches, and so many Complaints, can never enjoy Tranquility of Mind, or true Beatitude, let him be where he will.

I cannot think of any more Heads, which our Adversaries have to insist on in the Defence of the Cause which they
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patronise. Let us now return to the Thesis, which I laid down at first, and which has had always the Force of an Axiom with me, *viz. That no Man can be a Sinner by any one's Fault but his own.* Christ indeed, who knew no Sin, was accounted a Sinner, but he was only accounted so, *εικονοποιητὴς*, by a sort of Representation: Christ was not actually a Sinner; neither can we be actually Sinners by the Translation of another's Fault to us. The Light of the Sun is not clearer to the Eye, than this is to the Understanding, if we grant that Nature has set forth the Limits of Justice and Injustice, and rightly mark'd them in the Table of our Minds; I say, that nothing can be clearer to me, than that a Fault committed by another Person before I had any Existence, can by any Imputation be justly transferr'd to me. Every Action is no less individual than the Person who commits it, nor is it more communicable. And as *Peter* is not *Adam*, the Action of *Adam* is not the Action of *Peter*, and so *vice versé*: And the Imputation of any Action to a Person who is a Stranger to it, can transfer no real Guilt to an innocent Subject. And lastly, I will add further, that let this Imputation be of what Nature it will, 'tis the Action of God, and not the

the Action of Man; and if by that Imputation alone I should become a Sinner, I should become a Sinner by the Action of God; and by that alone; which far be it from me to affirm. Having weigh'd and consider'd all these Things with a free and impartial Thought, it seems safest to me, in the explaining original Sin, not to adhere obstinately to the imputative Part, least the Weakness of that Part being discover'd, the whole Doctrine should fall to the Ground.

LET US NOW proceed to the Doctrine of *Satisfaction* and *Justification*. We suppose that the Souls of Men had degenerated, and that there was a Necessity for a Mediator, an Intercessor, a Redeemer. When God, the Ruler of the Universe, thought fit to send down his only-begotten Son to the Earth, that by the Assumption of Flesh, and the taking our Nature upon him, he should offer himself a propitiatory Sacrifice for the Sins of the World; I say, it was pleasing to God, who is the Lord of all Things, who before had appointed propitiatory Sacrifice, by the Blood of Calves and of Goats, for the Expiation of Sins, to fulfill all these Types in the Fulness of Time, by the Sacrifice and Blood of his Son; and to offer Remission of

Heb. ix. &
x.

of Sins to obedient Believers, by the only Merit of this Victim of inestimable Price, which was offer'd once for all, for the Sins of the World. We find this very often repeated by the Apostles, (*Rom.* iii. 25. and v. 8, 9. *Ephes.* i. 7. *Col.* i. 14. and ii. 13, 14. *1 Pet.* i. 3. and i. 18. *1 Joh.* ii. 2. and iv. 10. *Rev.* i. 5.) who taught us that God was by these Means to be appeas'd; and that he would bestow upon us eternal Life, if we made good what we promis'd.

I said, that this OEconomy was pleasing to God, the Ruler of the World. He might indeed have given Remission of Sins, to Repentance, Reformation, and Obedience, or have appointed some other Method for it. For who shall dare to prescribe Bounds to Wisdom and Goodness divine? Any one may forgive his Debter gratuitously, or upon just Conditions. Nor is it our Business to enquire into these Things more scrupulously and solicitously. That God has reveal'd his Will to us is sufficient for us! Upon which it is safest, and most satisfactory to lean, and to rest, and from that Dependance to receive all manner of Comfort. Let us then return Thanks unto God, who mercifully sparing us, substituted to himself an acceptable Victim in our Stead. Let us to Christ re-

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Mat. xx.

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xxvi. 26,

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Luk. xxii.

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turn the highest and the warmest Thanks, who, through the Love that he bore to us, offer'd himself (by a cruel and ignominious Death) not only for an Example, but for a propitiatory and expiatory Sacrifice for the Sins of all Mankind. God, who is the most perfect Discerner of the Heart of Man, and of all Things, and who sees the Orders and Successions of Ages, from the Beginning of the World to the End of it, saw what was the most commodious and efficacious Method of bringing Mankind to Salvation; and it seem'd good to him by a Design to us unsearchable, to appoint this Dispensation for the Remission of Sins. Let us suffer God to govern his own World; and let us not either rashly or petulantly expect that Things divine should be brought to an exact Level with the Trifles of human Forms: 'Tis sufficient that we follow the Scripture for our Guide, nor do we contradict the Light of Nature. In the mean while, if there happens to be any one who is displeas'd with the Word *Satisfaction*, let us, if you please, for the sake of Peace, dismiss litigious Words, Words that are peculiar to the Bar, and which are not found in Canonical Scripture, provided we agree in the Thing, that we may cut off all verbal Quarrels

as much as we possibly can. In my Opinion, the more gently these Things are handled, not according to the subtle Wranglings and Finesses of the Law, but in a manner accommodated to the Customs and Rites both of the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, the more will they answer to human Affections, and to the Style and Design of the Scriptures. All unnecessary Controversies do Hurt to the Christian Religion, which in its Nature is pacifick.

As to what relates to the Doctrine of *Justification*, the Apostle St. *Paul* had several Discourses and Dissertations with the *Jews* upon that Subject, in which his chief Design was to convince them that the Mosaick Law or Dispensation was imperfect and elementary, compar'd to that of the Gospel; and that the first receiv'd its Accomplishment from the second; and that therefore the ceremonial Part of it vanish'd upon the Coming in of the Messiah, as the smaller Stars are wont to do upon the Rising of the Sun. Then he shew'd that no one is justified before God by the Observation of the Mosaick Rites, but by a lively Faith, and Uprightness of Heart, and a Purity of Life. Thus the Patriarchs, before the Mosaick Law were esteem'd just and acceptable to God. And the People in every Na-

Act. x. 35.

tion, *who fear God, and who work Righteousness*, are well-pleasing to God, though they know nothing of the Judaick Law. This is the royal Way to Heaven, the universal and perpetual Way. All particular OEconomies fall into this, and in this they end.

AND as the Subject which the Apostle treats of relates rather to the *Jews* than to Christians, so the Manner of treating it is plainly Judaick, as well by the Style and the Forms of speaking, as by the Manner of reasoning, and the Arguments adapted to their Way of thinking. We have no Reason to wonder then, that there are several Things in St. *Paul's* Epistles that are *obscura*, which seem to us obscure, abrupt and unconnected; when the Arguments, which are call'd *Argumenta ad hominem*, like so many Darts, do not strike every where, but only the Part they are aim'd at. Perhaps the Manners, the Customs and the Opinions, on which the Arguments depend, or from which they are fetch'd, the Dispositions of that particular People, or their receiv'd Traditions are sometimes unknown to us. And therefore the Force of the Arguments or the Allusions may not appear so lively to us, as it may do to Readers of that Nation and Genius. But the Doctrine

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of the Apostles concerning Justification, seems to me to be summ'd up in this, viz. That the Mosaick Law has nothing peculiar to it, and distinct from the Law of Nature, that can render us really just, agreeable and acceptable to God. But that our Salvation depends upon our inward Habitudes, and the Qualifications of our Minds, by the Intercession of Jesus Christ: *For in Jesus Christ neither Circumcision availeth any Thing, nor Uncircumcision, but Faith, which worketh by Love*, which is often repeated by the Apostles, as well with regard to the Mosaick Law, as to any other Dispensation whatever.

Gal. vi. 15.
and v. 6.
1 Cor. vii.
19.
Rom. ii.
28, 29.

WHAT then is *Justification* in the Sense both of *Jews* and Christians? I answer, that 'tis to become just, or to be accounted just, God himself being Judge. Or to be justified, is to be acceptable to God, and to receive Remission of Sins. The Word *Justification* is taken sometimes in a larger, and sometimes in a narrower Sense: But it always implies that a Person is acceptable God. To be justified, signified in the usual Acceptation, that a Crime is alledg'd against some Person; and then that that Person is absolv'd or purg'd of that Crime, Our Justification comprehends both the stricter and the larger Signification: God

grants Remission of Sins to those who
 Luk. xxiv. believe in Jesus the Messiah, and who
 47. Act. ii. 38. are obedient to his Law ; but yet by the
 and x. 43. Intercession of the Sacrifice of Jesus
 and xiii. 39. Christ. And this on the Part of God is
 call'd Reconciliation, and on our Part
 Remission and Purgation of Sins, (*Mat.*
xxvi. 28. Rom. iii. 24, 25. and v. 9.
I Cor. vi. 11. Heb. i. 3. and ix. 12.
I Pet. i. 19. Rev. i. 5.) Sometimes
 Justification is taken in a larger
 Signification, without any mention of
 Christ, as that of the Publican, *Luk. xviii.*
14. and of Abraham, Rom. iv. Jam.
ii. 23. when any one is esteem'd a
 Friend, and acceptable to God, for any
 just Cause whatever. In the same larger
 Signification, we are justified by that Faith
 which is call'd *natural*, by which we
 Heb. xi. 6. believe that there is a God, and that
 he is a Rewarder of them who diligently
 seek him. They who believe that
 there is a God, the best, the greatest,
 and the wisest of Beings, the Creator and
 Governor of the World, and of all
 Things, are so far pleasing to God ;
 And, if further, they believe in the Im-
 mortality of the Soul, and the Rewards
 of a future Life, and live justly and
 righteously, to the utmost of their Power,
 and the Extent of their Understanding,
 so far they are just before God, and will
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receive the Reward of the Just. Lastly, the Christian Faith enjoying a greater Light, and supported by more ample Promises, justifies after a singular and more eminent Manner, as it begets in us a more full and more perfect Justice, than either the Mosaick Law, or the Law of Nature, were ever able to produce in us, because it answers all the Conditions, and fills all the Parts that God has appointed and requir'd for the Remission of Sins. And therefore this Faith is highly distinguish'd, and is said to justify and to absolve from Crimes emphatically, and pre-eminently to render the Faithful reconcil'd to, approv'd of, and Friends to God, that we may be altogether and compleatly justified.

AND now whatever further Disputes or Differences may arise among Men upon this Head, they appear to me to be either rash or superfluous, and to have taken their Rise from some who but very ill understood the Condition of this Controversy, which was first enter'd into with the *Jews*, or Judaizing Christians; and who likewise, by reason of the Changes and Revolutions which have happen'd to Affairs, and Ages, and Nation, but ill understood the Style and Manner of arguing which *St. Paul* makes use of in the Explica-

tion of this Doctrine. When we stop at Particulars, we must have Recourse to the Fountains, and the first Foundations of Religion, that by Analogy with those primary Doctrines, we may understand the rest after a sound and reasonable Manner. There is a sort of an ἀνθερωπομιθεία, a sort of Conformity to human Passion, that runs through the whole Series of reveal'd Religion, whether it be Christian or Judaick: God is angry, and is appeas'd like Men: Sins are expiated after a manner, by Sacrifices and other Ceremonies: These Things are not done naturally, but morally or oeconomically, according to the Manners and the Passions of Men. And many other Things in the sacred Writings imitate the Order of human Actions; but they are to be interpreted θεοπραπῶς, according to the Dignity and Majesty of the Almighty. Thus, though good Works are altogether necessary to Justification and Salvation, yet the Word *Merit* is very incongruous between the great God, and us little miserable Wretches.

I should think I had said enough upon this Subject, if the pernicious Opinion, which the Antinomians, as they are call'd, obtruded upon the Christian Doctrine, had not come into my Mind. They say then, that we are justified, and render'd
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pleasing and acceptable to God by Faith alone, by naked Faith abstracted from good Works. Now one Thing alone seems to me to be sufficient to refute this impious Opinion: Whatever is repugnant to natural Religion, that can have no Place in any Religion that is of Divine Institution. But this Opinion is not only repugnant to the Perfections of the Divine Nature, but is an Obstacle to the Perfection of human Nature, and removes and overthrows the very Foundation and End of Religion in general, whether it be natural or instituted: And particularly as to the Christian Religion, as much as Light differs from Darknes, as much as Day differs from Night, so much is this Opinion different from the Institutions of Christ and his Apostles. Indeed we Christians have nothing to do with the ceremonial Works of the Moisaick Law. Christ fulfilled that Law, and his Apostles by Degrees annul'd it. That we are willing to grant; and that St. *Paul* very often preach'd: But the moral Law has an eternal Force, an everlasting Obligation, under every Divine Dispensation. Christ admirably expounded and confirm'd that Law in his first Discourse to the People, and commanded it to be more strictly observ'd by his Followers. And when one enquir'd

Mat. v. &c.

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of him what he must do to obtain eternal Life, he principally admonish'd him to keep the Commandments of God, that is, to observe the moral Law, *Mat.* xix. 16, 17, 18, &c. *John*, the Forerunner of Christ, commanded Repentance and Reformation of Manners, to prepare the Way for the Christian OEconomy, *Mat.* iii. 2, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12. Christ himself preach'd the same Thing, and would have us look upon them as Impostors, and as ravenous Wolves in Sheep's Cloathing, who teach any other Doctrine, *Mat.* vii. 15, 16, 17, &c.

THE Apostles likewise every where proclaim'd War against Vice and Impurity of Manners. They distinctly explain what the Works of the Flesh are which Christians are to avoid, and what the Works of the holy Spirit are which are pleasing to God, and necessary to Salvation. And they constantly exclude from the Kingdom of Heaven all those who are wicked, and Workers of Iniquity, *Gal.* v. 19, 20, 21, &c. *Heb.* xi. 14. They teach us, that this is the very Design of the Gospel, and of the Coming and Death of Christ, *Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works*, *Tit.* ii. 14. *Ephes.* v. 25, 26, 27. For

1 Cor. vi.

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Eph. v. 5.

Col. iii. 5.

6.

For this Purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the Works of the Devil, 1 Joh. iii. 8.

There are besides innumerable Places in the Christian Institutes, which teach and demonstrate that it must be an innate Justice, and the Sanctity of our own Souls, not a substituted one, or another's Sanctity that stands for our own, that alone are pleasing to God, and necessary to Salvation. *Every Man that hath this Hope in him, purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure,* 1 Joh. iii. 3. Jam. i. 27. The very Strength and Sinew of every Religion is internal Sanctity; and all Things that are repugnant to natural Religion, are to be purg'd from the Christian, like ill Humours, or to be cut off like Excrecences.

BUT the Followers of this Sect will say, perhaps, that they are just, by the Justice of Christ imputed to them: But how, I would fain know? of what Nature is this imputed Justice? Is there any Thing real in it, any Thing that is without the Understanding and the Imagination? Does it alter the Nature of the Subject? If I should impute Whiteness to an *Æthiop*; if there were no natural Mutation in the Body and Skin of the *Æthiop*, his Blackness would remain, notwithstanding my Imputation of Whiteness. In the

Of the Faith and Duties

the same manner that Imputation of Justice is of no Validity, since it causes no real Change, works no Renovation in the Person to whom 'tis imputed. You know the Comparison which the Apostle uses. If any one says to the Naked, or the Destitute of daily Food, Depart in Peace, be thou warmed and filled, and yet gives them nothing that will expel Cold, or appease Hunger, what good will this fictitious Charity do to another?

Jam. ii.
15, 16, 17.

BUT you will say, that according to the sacred Writings, and the Sayings of the Apostles, the Righteousness of Christ is imputed to us: Be it so; but 'tis after the same Manner that our Sin is imputed to Christ, 2 *Cor.* v. 21. And as Christ was not really a Sinner by that Imputation of Sin, so neither do we really become righteous (without Repentance and Reformation of Manners) by the Imputation of his Righteousness. These are extrinsecal Denominations, adapted to the Order and OEconomy of the Gospel; but can have no Effect in our Behalf, unless by the Efficacy of inherent and intrinsic Justice, of which the Apostles have often warn'd us, as formerly the Prophets did the *Jews*. But you will say, then where's the Validity of Gospel Faith? where's the Validity of

of Grace Divine? They are certainly both of the utmost Validity; but then 'tis by changing the Nature and Qualities of the Subject in which they are, and to which they are attributed; otherwise they are of little or no Validity. Faith without Works is dead, and Grace ineffectual, that does not generate Holiness. *Little Children, let no Man deceive you,* says the Apostle: *He that doeth Righteousness, is righteous, even as Christ is righteous,* 1 Joh. iii. 7. Gal. vi. 7. 1 Pet. i. 15. Now from what has been said, it appears that Sanctification is a necessary Condition of Justification.

Tit. ii. 11, 12.

HYPOCRITES are pleas'd with the fore-said Error, and sometimes likewise it steals upon the Weak and the Credulous. But both will be miserably deceiv'd in their Expectations: As much as every Man has sown, so much will he reap, and no more: They who are just in this World, not with real nor inherent, but with imputed Justice only, must expect to be happy in the next after the same Manner, happy not with a real, but with an imaginary and imputed Happiness; nor will they enjoy even that fictitious Felicity. But they will find themselves like Men, who are rous'd from a Dream in which they were eating
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and drinking plentifully, when the Faints vanish from their waking Eyes, and they find themselves oppressed with Thirst and Hunger. We bear with Childless Things, provided they are not hurtful; but Errors of this Nature are Poison to all Religion, and to the Christian Religion infinitely so. But if St. *Paul*, disputing a little too warmly against the *Jews*, magnifying the Ministry of the Gospel, and lessening that of the moral Law, might perhaps let one or two ambiguous Expressions escape him, which may be wrested by the Unskilful, to signify something which they do not mean; all that by sound Reason is to be rightly explain'd, so that it may be of a Piece with the rest of the Body, and may agree with several other Passages which are more perspicuous. This is a general Rule for the interpreting sacred Scripture; that we rashly suffer nothing to escape us, that may be hurtful or scandalous to the evangelick Doctrine, whose eminent Glory it is, that 'tis illustrious above all Institutions whatever, for forming the Manners, and for exalting the human to a Participation of the divine Nature. Nor are we to depart from this Rule upon any Pretence of new or translated Righteousness. But of this enough.

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THAT which 'tis usual to speak to next, is *Free Will*, and the *Divine Concurrence*; both knotty Questions, but to what Advantage? 'Tis very certain that we are so far free, and Masters of our own Actions, that God cannot by any Means be the Author of our Sin. And 'tis as plain on the other Side, that God is always ready to favour, to assist and prosper our hearty Endeavours: And 'tis no less perspicuous, that 'tis in some Measure in our Power to endeavour, when otherwise all Exhortations, all Precepts, nay, the whole Gospel it self, would be altogether useless and ludicrous. He who commands you or exhorts you to remove a Mountain, and neither supplies you with Strength, nor with Assistance for it, either mocks you, or upbraids you with your Impotence. But there is neither mocking nor upbraiding in the Divine Precepts: Whatever God commands us to do, that he gives us Power to do, either from Nature, or from Grace. Nor is it your Business, or mine, over-solicitously to enquire how far Nature operates, and how far Grace is the Performance of any Work. In the discussing of any Argument, we ought to separate Things that are certain, from those that are doubtful; and Things that are profitable from those

those that are useless: For Theological Controversies, if you cut off, first, the Differences that *arise from Words*, and then those that arise from needless Things, the rest will be contain'd in a narrow Compass, and be question'd but by few.

CONCERNING *Grace*, of which we made mention above, there are Controversies not unlike the former, and not less in Number. By the Word *Grace*, all Men understand a certain Divine Influence, by which the Mind is illuminated in the Search after Truth, and the Will and Affections are inclin'd to that which is good. This gracious Influx is, according to the Opinion of some, universal, and has its Force and its Influence more or less, according to the different Habits of the Souls upon which it descends. According to others, Grace is particular, and distinguishing; nor does the Inequality of the Effect always depend upon the Disposition of the Souls into which it flows. 'Tis true, it does not always depend upon it. I believe that all Men acknowledge a Grace that distinguishes some from others; as the Prophets, and the Apostles, and others that are appointed by God for the carrying on some singular Work. But in all others, why should not this Divine Force,

Force, like the Light of the Sun, be diffus'd in the same Manner without Distinction through all; but penetrate and operate diversly, according to the different Qualities of the Subjects upon which it falls. God is no Acceptor of Persons, nor is it just to prescribe Bounds to his Goodness, through the vain Love of our selves, or the Narrowness of our Souls, he is the common Father of us all, who lets the Divine Dew of his Grace, like the Rain, descend upon all; and who sows his Seed through the whole Field, which, according to the Diversity of the Soil, and other different Circumstances, springs up in less or in greater Quantities, with an unequal Variety: Christ offer'd himself a propitiatory Sacrifice for all. Nor will the Assistance of the holy Spirit be wanting to any one, provided he does what was in his own Power to do. In short, that Person presumes to set a Bar not only to our Piety and hearty Endeavours, but to the Glory of God himself, who pretends to restrain and confine to an uncertain few, that celestial Grace which is so plentifully pour'd upon all.

In the mean while, we have receiv'd from God the Power to will and to perform; and we are assisted in both of them by the Aid of the holy Spirit, operating

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Act. x. 34.
1 Pet. i. 17.

1 Joh. ii. 2.

rating and dwelling within us, (*Phil.* ii. 13. *Ephes.* iii. 16.) And from this Dwelling of the Spirit within us, we are call'd the *Temples of God*, and, as it were, the *Sanctum Sanctorum*, in which is the Seat of the Divine Presence, (*1 Cor.* iii. 16. and vi. 19. *Ephes.* ii. 22.) And from hence too we derive the certain Hope of a future Resurrection, and a glorious Immortality, by that holy Spirit dwelling within us, of which we have the first Fruits, the Principle, as it were, of Life, and of Deliverance from Corruption, *Rom.* viii. 11, 23. *2 Cor.* v. 4, 5. And from this likewise, that the same Spirit, or our Participation of it, is call'd the Earnest of our future Inheritance, and our Glory, as it were, a Part of the Price paid before-hand, to strengthen and establish our Faith for the Performance of the rest, *2 Cor.* i. 22. *Ephes.* i. 13, 14. and vi. 30. Lastly, the same Spirit, in another View or Allusion, is call'd a Seal, with which the Promise of our eternal Inheritance is seal'd, and becomes authentick, as it appears from the same Passages. So speaks the holy Scripture of the Significancy and Efficacy of the holy Spirit, who dwells in the Hearts of the Faithful; and though these Sayings have a stronger and singular Force in those who have tasted his extraordinary Gifts,

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Gifts, yet they comprehend and embrace all who are regenerated and born again, and renew'd by the same Spirit, (*Joh. iii. 5. Tit. iii. 5.*) who retain the same *in-corruptible Seed* in themselves, (*1 Pet. i. 23.*) and are Heirs of the same eternal Life.

To come to a Conclusion of all this, why do we pour forth daily Prayers before the Throne of Grace, publick as well as private Prayers, imploring the Almighty that he would vouchsafe to assist us, to help our Infirmities, to enlighten our Minds, to enflame our Wills and Affections with the Love of himself, and to give them a Bent towards Things celestial and eternal? Why, I say, do we interrupt, importune, and provoke God, if we have no Advantage to expect from it, and have no Occasion for his Help or Assistance?

THE Doctrine of the *Divine Decrees* comes next; the Doctrine of Election and Reprobation, and of the Prescience of God. It has always been undoubted to me, that God sees all Things at one View, present, past, and to come: That the Order of their Succession is appointed by him. And that in the natural World, besides Order, the Causes of all Things, from the Beginning to the End of Time, are constituted by him, comprehended

and included in the Idea of his infinite Mind. And not only the next, but the remotest Causes, the first, the last, the midmost, the whole Series, the whole Chain of Beings, or, if you would have it so, the entire Web and Contexture of the Universe: For he first confirm'd and dispos'd the first Principles, and the *Stamina*, as it were, of Nature, in such a Manner, and in such a Manner laid the first Foundation of the World, that not only a most beautiful Fabrick should arise from it, but that the same Matter in the immense Procession of Ages, being chang'd successively into a thousand different Forms, according to their determin'd Orders and Periods, should shew the manifold admirable Wisdom of the great Maker and Ruler. We ought therefore to conclude, (for 'tis impious to believe that all these Things should have come to pass fortuitously and contingently, without the Knowledge of God,) that the Idea of the natural World, eternal, immutable, universal, and infallible, as well in its first Fabrick and Face, as in its whole subsequent Order, and through all its Vicissitudes, from the Beginning to the End of Time, does both now exist, and from all Eternity has existed in the Divine Mind.

THE second Question is concerning the moral World, which has its Revolutions no less than the natural, its degenerate States, its Restorations, and its Accomplishments. Will any one pretend to prove to me, or to perswade me, that these Things any more lay hid from God, than those which we mention'd above. We see that Nature has always conspir'd with Providence, as its Associate and Confederate; and that the natural World does so incline to and answer to the Moral, that one appears to be the Servant and Minister of the other, *viz.* to execute the Vengeance of the Wrath of God upon a sinful Age, or to proclaim his Blessing upon a virtuous Generation. These Things being consider'd, 'tis just to believe that Wisdom and Justice divine has so temper'd these Things from the Beginning of Time, as that they should go on hand-in-hand; which, since it had been impossible, if God had not foreknown, and from the Beginning regulated the future Mutations of both Worlds, therefore we declare, first, that all the Motions and Mutations of Matter in the natural World, whether they are greater or less, were foreknown to God, and approv'd of by his good Pleasure. Then secondly, we likewise declare, that in the moral World, all its Changes

from good to bad, or the contrary, are subjected to the Divine Providence, Prescience, and Pre-ordination. These Things seem to me to be clear; but then a third Question remains a difficult and an obscure one, and that is, how far Divine Prescience and Pre-ordination, and that from all Eternity, have Place in particular Men and their individual Actions? The Difficulty of the Matter, and the Reason of Doubting lies here; that the Liberty of human Will seems to be quite destroy'd, if all its Motions are not only known, but are prescrib'd and determin'd from all Eternity. For these Things being once fix'd and establish'd by an omnipotent and infallible God, the Consequence seems to be, that all the Acts of the human Will are necessary, immutable, and unavoidable.

WE have hardly a better Way to untie this Knot, than by acknowledging the Weakness and Narrowness of human Understanding. That each Part consider'd separately, both divine Prescience, and the Freedom of human Will, is true, we clearly perceive; but we are ignorant of the Means of reconciling one to the other, when they seem to destroy each other. Nor yet is one or the other Truth to be deserted by reason of this

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Concomitant, and intermingled Ignorance, or because, as the Apostle says *we know only in part*. In every Subject, and more especially in an infinite one, (such as is that of the Divine Pre-ordination and Prescience,) we ought to distinguish the known from the unknown, and the clear from the obscure; and relinquishing those Things that are hid from us, retain those that fall within the Compass of our Discernment and Understanding: But we find by most certain Experience, and by internal Sense, that in many Things we are free, and our own Masters; and that it is in our Power to excite such and such Motions in the Body, and to exert our Thoughts from some Things, and to apply them to others; and in doubtful Cases to suspend our Assent: And we find that in several other Things we are Masters of the same Power. On the other Side, that God is omniscient, and that nothing can happen against his Will, or without his Knowledge, we as certainly know, as well from the Perfections of every Kind that must be necessarily in the Divine Nature, as because without such a Foreknowledge he would not be fitly qualified to govern the World. For human Affairs depend upon human Actions, (Providence still presiding,) and chiefly

upon these cardinal Points, upon the Will of Princes, upon the Deliberations and Decrees of Senates and Councils, and upon the Event of Battles. And if God did not foreknow these, he could not possibly know what would happen To-morrow, nor could he have any permanent Idea of human Affairs, and of the Government of the World, an Idea that would extend to every Nation, and to every Age. But if he has such a providential Idea, if I may so express my self, an Idea which comprehends the whole Series of human Affairs in all Ages, (such as all wise Men attribute to the Deity, against whose Expectation nothing can happen, and nothing that he has not foreseen,) he either approves or disapproves of it. If he approves of it, he fixes and establishes it. But that Series of Things, which he disapproves of, can never prevail, can never come to pass against the Will of the Almighty. For from what Cause can any Thing against his good Pleasure proceed? But if you say, that he permits these Things, and does not approve of them, that which is permitted by an all-powerful Cause, is in some Measure approv'd of, if not absolutely, at least comparatively; or to illustrate other Things, as Discords in Musick, tho' harsh and grating

ting in themselves, yet artfully mingled with the Concords, improve and exalt the Harmony. Besides, to make these appear the less hard, we are to observe, that with regard to the Order and Certainty of Things to come; Divine Foreknowledge is of the same Prevalency with Pre-ordination. For since that is infallible and universal, nothing whatever can come to pass, or can come to pass after any other Manner, than 'tis included in the Idea of the Divine Understanding. In short, if you grant that God foreknows all Things, he either foreknows them in their Causes, or in his own Decree. And each of them is of equal Efficacy, as to the Immutability of Events. But enough of this.

'Tis rather becoming of a wise Man to acquiesce in what he clearly and distinctly conceives, than to argue subtly concerning the Modes of incomprehensible Things. Let us determine then, and declare that God is omniscient, and that the World is govern'd by Providence, according to his Will and Appointment. In the next Place, we take it for an equal Truth, that in most Things we act spontaneously, voluntarily, freely: But if in comparing and reconciling these Things, we meet with something perplex'd and insurmountable

to

to our Understandings, let us expect *Elias*, as the *Jews* are wont to express themselves, a new Light, and a fuller Revelation. In the mean while, let us take the Course that is most safe, and letting Controversies rest, which we can never determine, and which, vehemently disputed, are wont to be detrimental to Charity; let us do our utmost to cultivate our Virtue and Piety, and no Divine Prescience or Pre-ordination will obstruct our virtuous Endeavours.

I know, indeed, very well that there are several other Controversies, and divers little Disputes, in which Divines are wont to engage; *but 'tis not my Business to set up for a Censor of them all*, when by their Number they are rather a Disgrace to the Christian Religion, than any Advantage or Honour. What we have treated of above, seem to me the weightier Subjects of Dissention among Friends: And of the Errors of the Papists we shall treat more largely below. Nor have I undertook to handle these very Points, that I might shew my Subtlety and my Dexterity, or that I might sift them more narrowly, or more accutely define them; but to the End, that laying aside Trifles, and calming and composing our Minds, we should avoid pernicious Opinions, and bear with those

those that are harmless, though they may be doubtful and contrary to our private Opinions. What Christ said to *Martha; Martha, Martha, thou art* Luk.x.40. *careful, and troubled about many Things, but ONE THING IS NEEDFUL*, may here as truly be said concerning these secondary Opinions: If you bring with you but a pious and sincere Mind, and an unshaken Faith in the Word of God, Charity will cover all lighter Errors. The Mind is but overwhelmed with the Multitude of Controversies, and is diverted from contemplating and examining Things which are most necessary to be known. To conclude this Argument, nothing remains, but to bring a short Dissertation concerning *Opinions* in general.

I call, by the Name of Opinions, the different Tenets of this or of that Sect, or Assembly of Men, who in the Fundamentals of Faith agree. Opinions of this sort, whether they are true, or whether they are false, proceed either from the simple Understanding alone, or from the Understanding led and incited by the Affections. The Act of the Understanding is in its self involuntary; nor can we arbitrarily give or deny our Assent to any Opinion or Proposition whatever, but we follow the Light that is held

held out to us: And therefore whatever depends upon the Understanding alone, though it may be Error, yet has it nothing of the Nature of Sin, but of human Infirmary only. But when vicious Affections influence the Understanding, and draw and allure it to take Part with themselves, that truly partakes of the Nature of Sin: And from this Fountain a great many Errors are deriv'd, though the Knowledge of it, for the most Part, escapes the very Persons themselves who commit them. Therefore whenever we find that we are vehemently carried on or inclin'd to this or to that Opinion, without a manifest Reason, or a preceding Examination, we have Grounds to doubt, and to enquire from what Causes, or what Originals, that Anticipation or Prejudice proceeds; which, if it cannot be reduc'd to pure Reason, or to any Degree of clear Knowledge, ought to be referr'd to the Passions. But here under the Name of Affections or Passions, I comprehend whatever, besides Reason and the sacred Oracles, has any Weight or Force to bend or incline the Mind to embrace any Opinion, whether it proceeds from the Body and its particular Temperament, which is chiefly the Case of Enthusiasts, or from external Causes.

SOME-

SOMETIMES the Constitution is too warm, and sometimes too cold and heavy. Fanaticks, they say, are inflam'd by the abounding Heat, and Atheists and Epicures from the heavy inanimated Matter. But this is not a proper Place to discourse of these internal Causes. There are many external ones, as Education, Authority, the Love and Desire of Ease, secular Advantage, and divers of the Conveniencies, Ornaments, and Honours of Life: From Education and antient Custom, we imbibe several Instructions concerning sacred Matter, without any Examination of the Things themselves, which can scarce be otherwise, or at least be entirely avoided. The Principles of Religion must be infus'd into tender Minds; but every Sect and every Church joins and intermingles with these those Opinions which are proper and peculiar to themselves, which are receiv'd with the same Faith, and are sometimes inculcated more diligently, and with greater Zeal, than the principle Points themselves. And from hence for the most Part it proceeds, that we never question the Truth of Things which we have received from our Ancestors and our Superiors, much less dare we contest or refute those which publick Authority will have believed to be

be true. If from these receiv'd Opinions you depart never so little, you will excite the Anger of some, and the Hatred of many against you, to the Detriment of your Fortune, and the Loss of your Reputation, if you suffer nothing more cruel. A Man had need both to have true Fortitude, and to be the warmest Lover of Truth, not to be terr'd by such Sufferings from embracing any Opinion that is displeasing to others, and detrimental to himself. Therefore I do not at all wonder that these sorts of Arguments have a great deal of Force with the Generality of People, when we are all but too much inclin'd to embrace the safer and more advantageous Party.

BELIEVE me, there is not the same Freedom of Soul, nor Liberty of Understanding, in discussing a Theological Question, that there is in one that is merely Mathematical. Here Truth alone touches the Mind, and alone claims our Assent, when the Mathematician is to receive neither Profit nor Detriment, whatever upon Conviction he pronounces to be Truth. But 'tis not so safe nor easy often, for the *Divine* to espouse that Part which claims his Assent by the Weight of its Reasons. Many Obstacles hinder him from within and without,

out, both from seeing and discovering Truth where it lies hid, and from owning it, and declaring it after he has seen and discover'd it. And if we, as we are Men, have at any Time felt any Impression, either from the Allurements and Delights of the World, or from the Apprehension of subsequent Evils, or, lastly, from the Prejudices of Education, we should have so much Consideration for human Infirmities, as in some measure to forgive those who, upon any of the fore said Accounts, have been drawn into Error.

THEREFORE the warm Maintainers of Opinions are to be distinguish'd, some from the other. They who by their Opinions corrupt good Manners and the Sanctity of the Christian Law, in my Judgment are not to be suffer'd: Nor are they any more to be born with, who offend against natural Justice, and the Foundation of human Society. But these two remaining unhurt, it seems to be free for every one, either to retain his Opinions within himself, or to publish them with Modesty, and with a Spirit of Peace. 'Tis impossible even for the fiercest Enemies of Christian Liberty, to hinder any one from reserving within himself, and from nourishing those Opinions which he has confin'd within

within his own Breast. And if you grant nothing but this, and are so little indulgent to those who err, that is not to be attributed either to your Justice or Clemency, but to Necessity and your want of Power to punish. But that we may observe both Human and Christian Justice, let us suffer every Man decently to propose his Opinion, as in the common Senate of Mankind, to be examin'd by the Rules of Truth and of Equity, that it may be refuted, if requisite, by those who dissent from it, or maintain it self by the Weight of the powerful Reasons it brings. This seems to me to be the best and the nearest Way to the Discovery of Truth. And they who walk in another Path, seem to me to erect an infallible Tribunal among Men; which being once erected and establish'd by Law, will have the Right of determining all Controversies. But they who do not arrogantly assume to themselves this supreme and infallible Right, but confess themselves subject to human Passions, and to human Frailties, and equally obnoxious to Errors in their Opinions: Their Decisions, and their Decrees can no further be prevalent (as far as they relate to the Discovery of Truth) than as they are founded up-

on the * sacred Writings, or upon right Reason ; all indeed acknowledge the holy Scripture for a Law and a Rule ; but of this we neither have nor acknowledge any infallible Interpreter : That is rightly to be referr'd to every one's Conscience, and to what they call the Judgment of Discretion in every individual Person among us.

MEN have always been allow'd in all * Sciences, and in all Sects, in order to advance the Knowledge of Truth, to examine one another's Notions and Opinions, to discuss them, to judge of them, to confute them, reject them, or embrace them : And if that is prohibited in Divinity alone, the Way to the Search and Discovery of Truth will not only be obstructed by such Prohibition, but what is of worse Consequence, Religion it self will lie under a Suspicion, that being conscious to it self of its own Infirmary, it

* " Basil. Epist. 80. p. 143. ἡ θεόπνευστος ἡμῶν διατυ-
 " γάτω γραφή, &c.

† " *Quæ obscure, vel ambigüe, vel figuratè dicta sunt,*
 " *eniquisq; sicut voluerit interpretetur secundum sensum, suum.*

" Aug. de Unit. Ecclesiæ, c. 16.

" " *Parem cum fidelibus ii qui errant pacis & quietis fruc-*
 " *tum accipiant, &c. V. Constantini verba apud Euseb. lib.*

" 2. de vit. Constan. Quare locum & huc transfer est,
 " cap. 55. in p. 349.

it is apprehensive of Danger, from any impartial and accurate Examinations; which we are very far from granting.

IF we consider all that has been said candidly and deliberately, it will neither appear agreeable to Equity, nor to our Interest, the Fundamentals of Faith being untouch'd, to obtrude our own Opinions upon any who are unwilling to receive them. There is a certain Beauty in an innocent Variety; and the different Colours in which Minds appear, are no less pleasing than those of Flowers, or of a thousand different Creatures which Nature has so variously painted. If all Objects were white, if all that we see were black, Nature would lose those Ornaments and that Beauty with which we so much are charm'd: Nor would a constant uniform Face of Things delight either our Eyes or our Minds. Besides, the different Talents and Opinions of Men are Spurs to the Mind which they exercise, add to its Force, and augment its Speed, that human Affairs may not dully languish or stagnate in a thoughtless Stupidity. None are wont to take the lighter Contentions ill, but the Morose, the Imperious, or the Conceited: And our Narrowness of Spirit, and Littleness of Soul, is often the Cause that we cannot endure any Thing that

is

is contrary to our Opinions. As for my Part, let me but see the Principles of the Religion of Nature, and the Principles of the Christian Religion, and no lighter Differences shall ever provoke me to break the Bonds of Friendship and of Charity.

C H A P. IX.

*Of the Christian Church ; its Govern-
ment and Discipline.*

AS formerly Philosophers of the first Rate, establish'd several Sects, divided and distinguish'd both by Name, by Doctrine, and by Institution, from the rest of human Kind ; so is it plain that Jesus of *Nazareth* had a Design, by a new Law, to establish a Sect distinguish'd from all other Sects ; a Sect that should be diffus'd through all Nations, and should through all Ages remain.

Sic parvis componere magna solebam.

Thus to compare great Things with
small I us'd.

But this Christian Institution is indeed of a higher Order, and has not so much Regard to the Schools of Philosophers, as

to the Religion in general, both of the *Jews* and *Gentiles*; the latter of which he utterly disapprov'd of, and the former he accomplish'd and abolish'd, and appointed a new Law for sacred Matters, and a People under that Law appropriated to himself; always retaining, improving, and illustrating the Law of Nature, the only Foundation of Virtue and of Piety.

Act xxiv.
5. 14.

THIS new Institution or Society was formerly call'd by the *Jews* the *Sect* of the *Nazarens*, or the *Nazaren Heresy*, (nor were these Names formerly of scandalous Signification,) taking its Name from *Jesus of Nazareth*: But among the *Gentiles* the Disciples of Christ were first call'd Christians at *Antioch*, from Christ their Head, which Title they now enjoy. But to denote this Assembly or Society of Christians, the Apostles us'd the Word *Ecclesia*, which we interpret Church, (which, in the *Jewish* Style, was the Congregation of the People,) which Christ had us'd before, when he said that he would build his Church upon the Confession made by *St. Peter*, viz. that he was the *Messiah*, the Son of the living God, Mat. xvi. 16, 17, 18.

Act. vii.

BUT we have said, that this Sect, or this Church, did not start up fortuitously and

and unexpectedly, but by the Means of profound Design and Preparation. And to that End Christ immediately, in the Beginning of this Ministry, as is known, chose twelve Apostles, whom taking and associating to himself, he fully instructed and inform'd, that they might be qualified afterwards to be sent and delegated to preach the Gospel through all the World. Besides, he sent seventy other Disciples, two by two, into the Cities of *Judea*, supplied with more than ordinary Gifts, that they might open and prepare the Way to the Kingdom of Heaven, *Luk. x.* Then after his Resurrection, Christ being about to leave the Earth, thus spoke to the Apostles in his last Words, *All Power is given unto me, both in Heaven and in Earth. Go ye therefore and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all Things whatever I have commanded you; and lo I am with you alway, even to the End of the World. Amen.* Then after his Ascension, by the Effusion of the holy Spirit, which he before had promis'd, he confirm'd and corroborated the same Apostles in the Discharge of their Apostolick Functions, that they might be Witnesses and Heralds of his Works, and his

Mat. iv.
18, 19 & c.
x. & xxviii.
19.
Joh. xvii.
18.

Mat. xxviii.
18, 19, 20.
Joh. xx.
21. and
xxi. 15, 16,
17.

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Mat. iv.
18, 19. & c.
x. & xxviii.
19.
Joh. xvii.
18.

Mat. xxviii.
18, 19, 20.
Joh. xx.
21. and
xxi. 15, 16,
17.

ACT. i. 8. Doctrine, not only in *Jerusalem*, and in
 v. 22. *all Judea, and in Samaria, but to the
 uttermost Parts of the Earth.* And
 that they might chiefly cause all Men to
 believe in his Resurrection from the
 Dead.

NOR did the Labours of the Apostles,
 by Day and by Night, want the Success
 which they aim'd at, but they bore
 plentiful and pleasant Fruit, and there
 were daily added to the Church such as,
 embracing the Christian Faith, were de-
 sign'd to be saved, as we read in the
 Acts of the same Apostles. But when
 the Multitude of Believers grew so nu-
 merous, that they could neither be kept
 together without some Government, nor
 without Teachers be instructed in any
 Discipline, the Care of each of these
 was the first Care that lay upon the A-
 postles. But as they knew that after the
 Course of their Lives was finish'd, they
 were to depart from the Earth, and that
 even while they liv'd, they were not to
 abide in one Place or City, or Region,
 since the Name and the Gospel of Jesus
 were to be sown and spread wherever
 the World had Room to receive them:
 In those Places where they had convert-
 ed most to the Faith, they constituted
 others, (call'd *ἐπισκόπους*, that is, Bishops
 or Overseers,) and who should be their
 Vice-

Vicegerents, and should perform both Functions of Teaching, and of Governing. These Bishops or Overseers appointed by the Apostles, and advanced to take care of others, afterwards themselves appointed others, *Tit. i. 5.* to publish and promulgate the Name and Doctrine of Christ, their Master and chief Shepherd, and to establish a new Order in their Divine Worship and OEconomy. Lastly, this Order, and this Hierarchy, distinguish'd and accomplish'd by several Degrees, Functions and Ministries in a continual Succession, will always propagate the Christian Faith, and preserve it to the End of the World, under the divine Protection of Christ, *Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13. Mat. xxviii. 19. 1 Cor. xi. 26.*

Act. xiv.
23.
1 Thes. v.
12.
Heb. xiii.
17.

Thus the Christian Church, from a small Seed, grew up to a flourishing Tree, nay, to a Wood, which flourishes still, and covers with its Shade a great Part of the Globe. This Church is divided into particular Branches, some of which are greater, and some less, which united together in the Trunk, constitute the Universal or Catholick Church. Let us now admire the divine Virtue of this Seed, I mean the Progress and Increase of the Christian Religion, which from so small a Beginning subdued Cities,

Countries, Empires: Not by Arms, or the Force of warlike Troops, as the celebrated Monarchies of old prevail'd, and more lately the Law of *Mahomet*; but a Doctrine publish'd by vulgar Persons, by Fishermen, inclin'd and bent the Minds of Men to give their Assent to it, and to pay Obedience to it, in spite of the Opposition of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, the Persecution of Emperors, and the Resistance and Rage of Devils and infernal Furies. But let us proceed,

WE have already treated of the Christian Doctrine in the preceding Chapters, vii. and viii. As for what relates to Government, Christ appointed no particular Form of Government for his Church. But the Apostles seem to have constituted that, which is in the Hands of Bishops and the Priests that are under them, which seems to have been introduced in the very first Ages of the Church. Nor am I yet of Opinion, that the Apostles appointed any particular Form of Ecclesiastical Government, so definitively and immutably, but that it is lawful to change it for the publick Good, and to set up another, when manifest Reason or Necessity require it. The various Forms and Methods of Administration, both in sacred and civil Matters, are not the ultimate Ends of Things,

Things, but Means for the Arrival at those Ends that is for the obtaining of Peace, and Virtue, and Piety. That which aims rightest at that Mark, and which seldomest misses it, that, whether it is in the Hands of one, or of many, is certainly the best Form of Government, both for sacred and civil Matters. But the Form of Ecclesiastical Government is, for the most part, adapted to the State of the Kingdom, or the Republick, where 'tis establish'd; that by such an Agreement they may be more of a piece, and contract the stricter Friendship by their Affinity; that they may support, and strengthen, and assist each other by their mutual Strength and Authority, in the procuring and promoting the Advantage and the Safety of the People committed to their Charge; *that we may live a quiet and peaceable Life, in all Godliness and Worthiness of Behaviour*, which is the Aim and Design of both Administrations.

To the Government of the Church, and the appointing Persons to reside over it, as we hinted above, belongs the Ordination and Consecration of its Ministers: For since the Christian Priesthood is neither Hereditary, nor limited to a particular Tribe or Family, as it was among the *Jews*; nor was it convenient that
any

any one should upon any sudden enthusiastical Motion, and at his own Will and Pleasure, assume and arrogate to himself the Office and Authority of a publick Teacher in the Church, least all the Laws of Decency being contemn'd, Confusion should arise; therefore to prevent this, this Power is granted to those only who, upon a preceding Examination, shall appear to those who reside over the Church to be the best qualified to undertake so important a Charge. Christ gave it to his Apostles, his Apostles to their Successors, and they to those who succeeded them, and so on. And it is but just and reasonable, that they who are approv'd of after this Manner, should be admitted into that new Order and Ministry by some solemn Ceremony. Christ was inaugurated for the Discharge of his Ministry by the Descent of the Holy Ghost upon him in a visible Form, which was the fulfilling the Type of all sacerdotal Unction. The Apostles were consecrated by Christ, by his Breathing on them, and afterwards by the Descent of the Holy Ghost, in the Appearance of fiery Tongues. The Apostles consecrated others for the Performance of this sacred Office, by the Imposition of Hands, as was formerly done by *Moses*, *Num.* xxvii.

Mat. iii.

16, 17.

Act. x. 38.

Joh. xx.

22.

Act. ii. 2.

1 Tim. iv.

14.

2 Tim. i. 6.

Act. xiii.

3.

xxvii. 18, 19, 20. *Deut.* xxxiv. 9. And the same Custom, after putting up Prayers to God, is now us'd in the Church. This is the Order receiv'd and commanded; but if by the mutable and uncertain State of human Affairs, in some extraordinary Case, these Rules cannot be observ'd, in such an Emergency we must yield to Necessity, which is always too hard for Law, and we must use those Means and Methods by which the principal End of the Christian Revelation may be best and nearest attain'd. Elections, as in some of them, the Manner of Discipline, were formerly more popular, which insensibly, to avoid Confusion, devolv'd upon those who presided over the Church.

To this Government likewise belongs the Privilege of making Laws and Constitutions concerning Ecclesiastical Matters, and of instituting Rites about indifferent Things. But these Privileges are neither the same, nor equal in particular Churches, but have their different Bounds, according to the different Constitutions of Kingdoms or Republicks. But here a Question is wont to be mov'd concerning the Power of assembling Synods or Ecclesiastical Conventions, whether the Right of it is in the civil Magistrate, or in those who are
set

set over the Church. 'Tis manifest, that in the first Ages of the Church, under the *Roman* Empire, the Presidents of the several Churches exercis'd this Power. But the Empire being chang'd from Heathen to Christian, Emperors and Kings exercis'd the same Power. Now the Question is, how it came to pass, that this Right was transferr'd from the Ecclesiastical to the Secular Power? Not by any explicate Contract, or by the Concession of any general Council, but probably by the tacite Consent of the Church, for the Preservation of Peace and Concord between both Estates. And indeed it could hardly happen otherwise upon that memorable Event, and that new Face of Affairs: For all the Entrances and the Promotions to ecclesiastical Riches and Dignities depended upon the Emperors, and likewise in their Hands was the coercive Power; for as human Passions prevail'd on the Church to give their Consent to this, the Desire of Peace did the same Thing, least two Legislative Powers should be always contending against each other, or the Christian Clergy should appear to be ill Patriots, or ill Subjects. But if Princes shall issue out any Commands, or make any Thing Law, which is like to end in the Destruction or the great Corruption

tion of the Christian Religion, we are not to desert the Cause, but ought to assemble peaceably, and to deliberate concerning the Security of the Christian Religion, even without the Command or Call of the Magistrate. For in any extream Necessity, the Right that every Man had by Nature revives and reverts to the People.

To this Government, we said, that we ought to refer the Appointment of sacred Rites in Things that are indifferent otherwise. But those expletive Ceremonies ought to be few and modest; few, least being too much employ'd about external Things, we should be too little intent upon the inward Sanctity of the Soul; and modest, least they should produce Pride, or become the Seeds of Superstition. Lastly, to this Chapter of Government belongs the Inquiry into the Power of *binding or loosing*, of retaining or remitting of Sins, which are related to ecclesiastical Censures and Discipline, of which now we shall briefly treat.

THE Power of Punishing and of Pardoning belongs, in some measure, to every kind of Government: But different Governments use different Ways, and different Kinds of Punishments. The Church has nothing to do with corporal Punish-

Heb. xiii.
17.

Punishments; yet it seems but reasonable that it should be in the Power of those who govern it, to prohibit impious and prophane Persons from performing or partaking of their sacred Rites, or to expel them from their Congregation, as far as it may be practicable. Without this Discipline and these Punishments, neither the Honour of Piety, nor the Purity of Manners can be preserv'd. And therefore they who are thus prohibited or expell'd, according to the receiv'd Laws, ought to bear the Sentence that is pass'd upon them peaceably, and with an equal Mind, referring their Cause, if they think they have any Injustice done them, to the supreme Judgment of God, who is neither fallible, nor a Respector of Persons; nor is it less in the Power of those who govern the Church, to set free those who are bound by their Censures, and to absolve them whenever they shall think fitting.

BUT there is another Kind of ecclesiastical Absolution, the Enquiry into which will be a great deal more difficult; and that is, concerning the Remission of Sins, by the Absolution of the Priest who is Confessor. 'Tis the Opinion of several Persons, that the Ministers of the Gospel have Power to absolve all those from their Sins who confess

sefs and repent, and even so effectually to absolve them, that all those Sins shall be forgiven in Heaven, which the Priests in a due Manner shall forgive upon Earth. And that if the Penitents neglect that sacerdotal Absolution, it will be dangerous, if not fatal to them. These Things are to be understood with Caution, least we fall into Errors. In the first Place, 'tis evident that 'tis not in the Power of a Priest, nor of any Person whatever, to forgive Sins by his own Authority, and that the effectual Forgiveness of Sins does not depend upon any external Conditions whatever, but upon true Repentance only; and that if a Sinner truly repents, his Sins will be forgiven, whether the Priest absolves, or does not absolve him. And if the Sinner does not truly repent, whatever the Priest says or does, his Sins remain unforgiven. And therefore sacerdotal Absolution is either deceitful or superfluous. And therefore in my Opinion it had been more prudent to have abstain'd from these Forms of Absolutions, which beget in the Minds of Men a deceitful Hope, a vain Confidence, and a delusive Consolation; and sometimes the People foreseeing this Remedy, the more easily indulge themselves in a Licentiousness of sinning. But it is both lawful and expedient

Ezek.
xviii. 22.
and xxxiii.
14, 15, 16.
Luk. xv.
18, 19, &c.

pedient to lay before Sinners that are truly contrite, the Promises of God concerning the Remission of Sins. And if perhaps they have freely confessed some secret Crime for the sake of unburdening their Consciences, we ought in Charity to succour them in their Affliction, by Christian Advice and Prudence, that they may not despair of the Mercy of God. Lastly, if any one that is sick either in Body or Mind, shall require this Absolution, as a certain Anodine, provided Repentance goes before it, it is not to be denied him. Let it prevail to his Comfort, as far as a Declaration of the Divine Goodness towards repenting Sinners, and of a conditional Absolution can prevail: But as for the judicial Absolution of the Priest, (excepting that which is us'd in the restoring the Excommunicated,) it would, in my Opinion,

St. Jerom,
upon those
Words in
the xvith

do no Harm to the Christian Religion, if it were entirely omitted.

of Matth. *I will give thee the Keys*, says thus: The Bishops and Priests not understanding this Passage, assume something of a Pharisaical Pride, and vainly believe that 'tis in their Power either to damn the Innocent, or to absolve the Guilty, when God has no regard to the Sentence of the Priest, but only to the Lives of the Guilty.

BUT you will say, Christ gave his Apostles this Power of loosing and binding, of remitting or retaining of Sins, as appears by what he says to St. Peter,
Mat.

Mat. xvi. 19. *I will give unto thee the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on Earth, shall be loosed in Heaven*, which he likewise spoke to all the Apostles after his Resurrection, *Joh. xx. 23. Whose soever Sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whose soever Sins ye retain, they are retained.*

Some Persons add a third Passage, *Mat.*

xviii. 15, 16, 17. But there Christ speaks of composing the Differences between Man and Man; and that he who does the Wrong may be brought to a sound Mind, by repeated Admonitions; and he to whom the Injury was done, may shew that he has done his Duty. Christians are not rashly to go to Law, *Mat. v. 25. 40.* Nor to bring a Cause before a Judge who is an Unbeliever, *1 Cor. vi.* If any of your Brethren, says Christ, does you an Injury, admonish him privately, like a Friend: Then, if alone you do not prevail, before Witnesses: And lastly, if he is obstinate, before the Church, or the publick Congregation. But if he has neither Sense of Shame nor Justice after the last Trial, avoid him as a Heathen and a Publican, and leave him to the Judgment of God. But this Passage, as far as I can see, has nothing to do with ecclesiastical Causes or Censures, or with Faults committed against the Church. But let us proceed to consider the two former Passages.

WE will first speak to the two fore-mention'd Passages together, and afterwards consider them separately. First then, I say in general, that neither these nor any other Passages of Scripture are to be explain'd or interpreted after such a manner, as to make them repugnant to clear Reason, and to other Places of Scripture. I would fain know then, as

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I said above, whether these Passages are to be understood of the Sins of the Penitent or the Impenitent. If of the Sins of the truly Penitent, we are like to have no Quarrel. But if of the Sins of Hypocrites and the Impenitent, in vain you pronounce, *I absolve thee*. For neither will God forgive their Sins, nor is it in the Power of any Mortal to do it against his Will. This natural Reason dictates to us, and this the holy Scripture confirms, since it every where plainly declares, that Repentance is the Condition propos'd for the obtaining Salvation, and the Remission of Sins, *Mat. iii. 7, 8. Luke iii. 3. and xxiv. 47. Act. iii. 19. and xi. 18. 2 Pet. iii. 9.*

THESE Things being premis'd, I shall briefly enquire what is meant by the Use of the Keys, and by those particular Phrases of binding and loosing, which Christ made use of. I cannot find that that particular Expression is to be met with in any other Passage of the holy Scriptures, but it is often to be found in the Writings of the *Talmud*, as has been shewn by the Learned, from whence it appears that the Diction is Judaick; in which Rabbinical Authors it denotes the Power, or the Form and Custom of explaining what is lawful or unlawful, according to their Law. And therefore
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the Interpreters, who from this Original derive the Expression of Christ, give it only an equal Force and an equal Signification, that is, that Christ in these Words granted to St. *Peter*, and in his Name to the rest of the Apostles, the Authority and Charge to explain both to the *Jews* and the *Gentiles*, what is lawful and unlawful, according to the Law of Christ, or according to this new Evangelick Dispensation. And thus upon the Departure of Christ, the Apostles are constituted Vicegerent Legislators, or authentick Interpreters of the Law it self, infallible Censors of Doctrines and Manners, that the Christian Profelytes might learn from their Mouths their Instructions, Decrees, and Resolves, how far the Law of *Moses* was abolish'd, and how far it was to be observ'd, or for a Time to be mitigated. Questions concerning these Things in the Beginning of the Gospel were often put, in order to be resolv'd by the Apostles, as is manifest by the Acts and the Epistles of the Apostles, *Act. x. 13, 14, 15. and xv. 20. and xxi. 24. Gal. ii. 14.* as concerning Circumcision, and sacrificing to Idols, concerning Festivals, and other Things of the like Nature, to which the Judaising Christians, in some measure, adher'd, as did the Novices among the

Mat. xxviii.

19, 20.

Joh. xx.

21.

Vid. Mat.
xxiii. 4.
and 13.
and Luk.
xi. 46, 52.

Gentiles, who had not intirely shaken off their ancient Rites. Neither Scribes nor Rabbinick Doctors are to be consulted for the future, upon what you pronounce, says Christ; upon your Authority and your Determinations, the Rule of Things lawful and unlawful shall from this Time depend: And the Apostles were often and a long Time employ'd in determining these Things, as is evident from their Writings. Nor can I easily believe, that Christ in this Place made use of an Expression which was altogether new, and which had not been receiv'd either by the *Jews* or the *Gentiles* *, and which, for that Reason, his principal Disciples, to whom he directed his Discourse, would not be able to understand.

As for what relates to the second Passage, *Joh.* xx. 23. a much clearer Mention is made there of the remitting or retaining of Sins. Concerning which Matter, if you agree to what we have said above, you ought to follow their Interpretation, who are of Opinion, that this Power was granted only to the Apostles, because they were Persons who could

* *Mos erat apud Hebraeos, cum alicui potestas dabatur, Legem & Prophetas interpretandi, clave datâ, quasi in possessionem muneris mittere.* Grot. ad Luc. xi. 52.

could not err in discerning the Hearts of Men, and in distinguishing the true from a dissembled Repentance. The Words that immediately go before in the Text, plainly aim at this Meaning, *Ver. 22. And when Christ had said this to his Apostles, he breathed upon them, and said to them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose soever Sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever Sins ye retain, they are retained.* This Coherence have the Words, and 'tis not in the least to be doubted, that a much greater Power and Authority in this Matter was granted to the Apostles, than to any of the present Ministers of the Gospel whatever. I do not in the least wonder, if they who could see through the Hearts of Men, who could give Health to the Diseas'd with a Word alone, or with the lightest Touch, or with their very Shadow; if they who could bring the Dead to Life again, exercis'd a very peculiar Authority in the Remission of Sins. When Christ heal'd the Man who was sick of the Palsy, and said to him, *Son, be of good Cheer, thy Sins be forgiven thee;* the Scribes and Pharisees murmur'd, saying, *This Man blasphemeth, who can forgive Sins but God alone?* To whom Christ answer'd, *Whether is it easier to say, thy*

Mat. ix.
Luk. v.

Sins

Sins be forgiven thee; or to say, arise and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath Power on Earth to forgive Sins, he says to him that was sick of the Palsy, Arise, take up thy Bed, and go unto thy House; when he, immediately rising before them all, and taking up the Bed on which he had lain, went to his House, glorifying God. Thou who pretendest to remit Sins, do as he did; imitate Christ and his Apostles by working Miracles immediately before, or immediately after thou pronouncest Absolution, and we will believe thee. But if thou art unable to do this, remember that nothing is rashly to be attempted in sacred Matters. As Christ had a Power superior to that of the Apostles, so neither are the Apostles equall'd by their Successors. Nor did the Powers and Privileges of the first Christians descend with equal Force to Posterity. The Descent was gradual to a fix'd State, in which we ought to acquiesce, unless Miracles should chance to revive.

Now two Things appear to me to be contain'd in the foremention'd Words, which Christ spoke to his Apostles. The first is general, and common to all the Ministers of the Gospel, as well as to the Apostles, *viz.* that they preach the Word

Word of *Reconciliation* and of *Remission of Sins* in the Name of Jesus Christ. Thus St. *Paul* calls the Gospel it self, the *Word of Reconciliation*, or the *Ministry of Reconciliation*, or the Ministry by which Men are reconcil'd to God, and their Sins are forgiven through Jesus Christ; but without any Mention of a private Absolution, 2 *Cor.* v. 18, 19, 20. And thus too in St. *Luke*, the Words which Christ spoke to his Apostles, when he was about to ascend into Heaven, are these: He said to them, *Thus it is written, and thus it behov'd Christ to suffer, and to rise from the Dead the third Day: And that Repentance and Remission of Sins should be preach'd in his Name among all Nations, beginning at Jerusalem, Luk.* xxiv. 46, 47. This Declaration of the Remission of Sins through Christ, is the common Duty of all the Preachers of the Gospel; and this, without doubt, is included in the Words of Christ. But there is another Power which seems to me to have been peculiar to the Apostles, and to those who were able to discern and distinguish the Spirits of Men; and that is an authoritative Power to grant Remission of Sins to any one, according as the internal State of his Mind should

appear to them, and his unfeign'd Affection to God.

To speak the whole Matter in two Words: The Power of remitting Sins was given to some in the Church. The Question is, to whom was it given? Was it only to the Apostles? or was it given with equal Force to their Successors in the Church, in a continued Series, even to our own Times? I am of Opinion that that Power, as far as it is authentick and judicial, was granted only to the Apostles, and cannot now be exercis'd by any Ministers of the Church whatever. The Faculty of *discerning Spirits*, and of working Miracles, attended and confirm'd this Authority. But these Gifts being withdrawn or discontinued, the Power was at an End with them, being depriv'd of its Marks, its Authority, and its Effects, as it besel in the Uction of the Sick. In the mean Time the other Power, *viz.* that of preaching the Word of Reconciliation and Peace to the truly penitent, both remains, and will always remain. In short, the foremention'd Words of Christ to his Apostles, seem to comprehend both the one and the other Power, according to the Difference of Times and Persons, transitory or permanent.

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LET so much suffice concerning the Remission of Sins. But what is meant by *retaining Sins* is less clear, unless this likewise is restrain'd to the Apostles only. If you understand this *Retention* so, that no Man's Sins can be remitted, who does not obtain Absolution from some Priest, certainly a great many pious and just Men will be thrust down into Hell. But if you rather chuse to refer both the Remission and the Retention to ecclesiastical Censures and Punishments; I am of the same Opinion with you. Now therefore let us make a little Enquiry into the Grounds and Powers of these ecclesiastical Censures.

THE Persons obnoxious to the Censures of the Church, are the Debauch'd, the Schismatical, and the Heretical; then laps'd or relaps'd Penitents; and, lastly, the Contumacious. I could wish the Censure of the Church were more severe and more pointed than it is against the Debauch'd; or that it were more vigorously exerted than we find it is at present. The Heads of the Clergy, chiefly shew their Spirit and their Severity, in suppressing the Opinions which dissent from the Doctrine of the Church, as if the Whole of Religion turn'd chiefly upon these; but the ecclesiastical Discipline, both among the *Jews* and Christians,

stians, was chiefly instituted for the chastising Immorality, and the Encouragement of Virtue and Piety. The Antients took care to deter Men from Idolatry, from Adultery, from Murder, and other Sins of the like Nature, by the Fear of Punishment and of Infamy; and made it their chief Business to extirpate Vice of every Kind, the Root of every Evil: For Vice being banish'd, they justly believ'd that the Difference of Opinions in other Things was not at all formidable. Lastly, they who for their Crimes, or their flagrant Vices, were at last expell'd from the Community of Christians, after they had in vain been duly admonish'd; they who neither made any Return to it, nor desir'd or endeavour'd to make any Return to it, were look'd upon as forsaken, as abandon'd Persons, and as almost desperate. And surely their Sins were deservedly said to be retain'd.

THEY are vulgarly reputed Schismatics, who separate themselves voluntarily from the Communion of the Church, and apart from the publick Congregation, frequent Conventicles, either openly or by stealth. This very often arises from Faction, sometimes from Weakness, and sometimes from just Causes, which was the Case of the Reformed Churches,

Churches, when they separated from the Church of *Rome*. And therefore we ought to enquire what that is which makes Schism and Separation criminal, As he who withdraws himself from the Command of his Prince, is wont to be call'd a Rebel; he who withdraws himself from the Church, has the Name of a Schismatick. The Fault of which, is sometimes in the Prince, and sometimes in the Church. If at any Time either one or the other gives important and urgent Cause for breaking the Bonds of Communion and of mutual Duties: We ought certainly to suffer many Things from the Prince, and many from the Church, with Patience, through our Love and Desire of Peace, which is becoming of a Christian, and becoming of a Patriot, and not suffer our selves to be withdrawn from the common Society, and the common Obedience, either by Levity, or the Itch of Novelty, or the Hope and Desire of Gain, or by any private Passions whatever. We ought to dissemble some publick Evils, to excuse others, and to bear with others as well as we can: But that we may not appear to be stupid, we ought to distinguish between Evils that are to be born, and insupportable Grievances. When Oppressions and Grievances are grown
so

so great, that they are become intolerable, we ought to shake them from our Shoulders, which can no longer endure them. And with regard to the Church, which is principally here concern'd, they who overturn the Foundations of Religion, who introduce Idolatry, or a vile Superstition into the Worship of God; they who obtrude upon us the absurdest Things, and which are repugnant to all our Senses for Articles of the Christian Faith; 'tis they certainly who are the true Schismatics, and deserving of the heaviest Censures: But they who withdraw themselves from such a Communion, do but fly from those who have the Plague upon them, or other infectious Distempers. 'Tis to be determin'd therefore by the Force of Reason, both who are deserving of the Name of Schismatics, and under what heavy Censures they ought to lie. But let us proceed to the Hereticks.

WHATEVER savours of Falshood, says *Tertullian*, that may be term'd *Heresy*, even though it be an ancient Custom. Antiquity does not change Truth into Falshood, nor Falshood into Truth. And the same says as truly, that 'tis Truth, and not Novelty that convicts Men of Heresy. All Men, I believe, are of this Opinion. But by what Rule, what

what Marks, what Tokens shall we distinguish Truth from Falshood? First then, the universal Mark is clear and evident Reason; whatever is repugnant to that, can never either pass with Men of Sense for Truth, or for the Meaning of holy Scripture, or for an Article of Christian Faith. He who allows of no distinguishing Faculty, takes away all Truth. In the next Place, the sacred Writings never contradict natural Reason; and that which is confirm'd by these two Witneses, whatever the reigning Church may say, or whatever it can do, that can be neither Schism nor Herefy; and is not only free from Guilt, but ought to be firmly and constantly maintain'd, as the pure Truth of the Gospel. In the mean while, a becoming Veneration is due to Antiquity, is due to the Fathers, is due to ecclesiastical Councils; but the holy Scripture comprehends alone all the Force, all the Credit, and all the Authority of them altogether *.

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* St. Cyprian Epist. 63. *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear him.* Wherefore if only Christ is to be heard, we ought not to regard what any one, who was before us, believ'd it is our Duty to do, but what Christ himself did, who was before all. For we ought not to follow the Customs of Men, but the Truth of God. *This is no less true in the Theory, than it is in Practice.* See St. Austin

BESIDES, the Apostles Creed is wont to be look'd upon as the Characteristick, and as it were the very Signal of Orthodoxy; *of thinking rightly concerning the Christian Doctrine*, and of a fix'd and approv'd-of Faith. Thus *Tertullian* in the foremention'd Passage, *The Rule of Faith*, says he, *is one, which alone is never to be chang'd, and never to be reform'd*, viz. *the Belief in one omnipotent God, the Creator of the Universe. As long as this Rule of Faith remains, other Things which regard ecclesiastical Discipline, and which are liable to be canvas'd and controverted, may admit of the Novelty of Correction and Alteration, the Grace of God in the mean while assisting us, and supporting us to the last.* In this Belief let us constantly persevere: But they who multiply and augment Articles necessary, if you believe them, to Faith and to Salvation, these Persons, as they lay their Snares for the entangling the Weak, so they furnish out Matter and a Handle to Cavillers, and are the Occasion of tearing the Church to Pieces by schismatical Separations.

HERESY,

Austin against *Max. Arian*. p. 14. c. and of the Unity of the Church, c. 3. against the *Donatists*, both 18 and 8. Epist. cited by *Hooker*, p. 119, 120.

HERESY, as far as it is distinguish'd from Schism, is an Affection of the Mind, if I may so express my self, that never can be known but by God alone, or Men by God inspir'd. 'Tis not defin'd in the sacred Writings; and as 'tis in other Places defin'd, it always supposes a Vice of the Will, which lies hid from us in its inward Recess, unless it betrays it self by deprav'd or seditious Morals, or the Arch-Hereticks publish Opinions, which have a manifest Tendency to them. If they appear to be downright fanatical, they ought to be sent to the usual Hospitals appointed for the Reception of mad Men, and there to be kept till the fermented Blood has thrown off its Scum, and grown cool again, and the Patients return to themselves. Besides, we must distinguish between apostolical and modern Authority, in the inflicting of Censures. In my Opinion we ought wholly to abstain from *Anathema's*, which suppose infallible Power. Let not our ecclesiastical Censurers rage so, nor vainly believe, that they have the Power to drive those down to Hell, at whom they level their Thunders, nor to separate them from the internal Communion of the Catholick Church, and from the Connexion with Christ their Head.

Act. v. 5.
an. xiii. 11.
and 1 Cor.
v. 5.
1 Tim. i.
20.

Head. They rage and bluster in vain, if they at whom they sling their *Anathema's*, do but adhere to their own Opinions, through a Love to God and to Truth, *Act. iv. 19. 1 Cor. ix. 16.* The Apostles by their powerful Censures, could not only affect Mens Minds, but their Bodies, punish them with Diseases, or even with Death, or deliver those whom they had once devoted over to the Devil to be tormented; and thus the Sentences which they pronounc'd manifested their Power by their Effects: But when the Sentence has no Effect, then to throw their *Anathema's* up and down, what is it else but to brandish * idle Thunders against the empty Air. But let us proceed to that which remains.

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* *Constitut. dict. Apostol. l. 2. c. 21.* For when a just Man is by any one unjustly slain, he will eternally rest with God. And so likewise one who shall be wrongfully excommunicated by the Bishop. Then there is another Saying: A Curse shall return upon his own Head, who wrongfully utter'd it against another. St. *Austin* in his Treatise of true Religion, says thus: Divine Providence often suffers good Men to be expell'd from the Congregation of Christians, through the too turbulent Seditions of carnal Men; which Contumely or Injury, when they have born most patiently to preserve the Peace of the Church, and endeavour'd to introduce no Novelty, either of Schism or Heresy, those Persons will teach Men with how true an Affection, and how great a Sincerity of Charity, God ought to be serv'd.

THE next Thing to be consider'd is the Chastisements of *relapsed Penitents*, which it would be difficult to define precisely; for they are not pretended to be founded upon Divine Right; but depend upon Christian Prudence, and the Constitutions of the Church, which, according to the Difference of Times and Places, are changeable. While the Church stood divided from the Magistrates, the latter being yet Heathen, and could no where call for Assistance, it thought fit to secure it self by severe Laws against laps'd and relaps'd Penitents, to strike the greater Terror into Apostates, or others, who had revolted from the Christian Faith and Manners: Of what Nature the Penance prescrib'd by the Antients to publick Penitents was, with what Severity and Perseverance it was inflicted, may be seen in *Tertullian*, *St. Cyprian*, and others. But there is now another Face of Affairs, another State of the Church. How far that Discipline ought to be reviv'd, which is now grown obsolete, and in what Manner and Form it ought to be put in Practice, is a Matter of important Consideration. One Thing we ought to take particular Care of, that we do not appear to set up a Tyranny over the Guilty and the Repentant, nor to frighten Christians as much

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from Repentance after they have sinn'd, as from Sin, before they commit it. Prudence is requisite in either Respect, both for the healing Wounds and preventing them: But the Fault being really and effectually remov'd, the Punishment is likewise remov'd. But neither the Crime nor the Punishment can be evaded by fictitious Indulgences, or an imaginary Purgatory.

LET us, lastly, consider those who are guilty of Contumacy. The Contumacious are those who refuse to appear after they have been lawfully summon'd, or to submit to the Sentence pronounc'd against them, though they belong to that Jurisdiction to which they refuse Obedience. But these Things are involv'd with human Laws, its Questions and its Debates. Certainly a peaceable and modest Behaviour in all his Actions is most becoming of a Christian, whether it be in the defending his Cause, or in the submitting to Punishment. Though at the same Time every one is at Liberty to maintain his lawful Privileges. Nor are they less unjust who invade another's Rights, than they who refuse Obedience to lawful Commands.

THUS have we briefly treated of the Government and Discipline of the Church, in the Management of which the Prudence of those who preside over it, will chiefly

chiefly be tried, and appear. Christian Religion does not prescribe to its Professors every particular little Thing, as the Law of *Moses* formerly did to the *Jews*. That might more commodiously be done in a Law, which was the Law of one People, and of one Nation, and which was not always to remain: But in the Christian Religion, which is a Religion of all Nations, and of all Times, even to the Consummation of all Things, it had been no easy Matter to have prescrib'd one only inflexible Form in the Government, Discipline, and Rites of external Worship: I say, one only Form, which should be adapted to every State of the Gospel, both in its Infancy, and when it should be grown up; adapted to the State of every Nation, Eastern, Western, *Jew* and *Gentile*, and the rest, who differing in Tempers, Manners, Customs and Genius's, are spread through the Face of the Earth; and lastly, a Rule which should be adapted to every Age of the World, which gradually advances from Infancy to Maturity. These Things, so different in themselves, require different Ways of doing Things, and very moderate Measures, that in each of them we may attain to the ultimate End which we aim at, *viz.* Peace,

and the Increase of Virtue and true Piety. Let us always retain and revolve in our Minds that Saying of the Apostle, *Let all Things be done decently, according to Order, and to Edification.* Since these Rules then are general, 'tis evident that many Things are left to the Wisdom and Judgment of those Persons who are set over the Church, that by their Advice the Order and Administration of external Things may, according to Occasion, be so seasonably manag'd, that the weightier Points of the Christian Law may remain safe and untouch'd, and Offences, as far as possible, may be avoided, while a due Regard to a worthy Decency is every where preserv'd. In these External Councils sometimes dissent from Councils, and Synods differ from Synods; for which, since the State of the Church is mutable, according to the Difference of Times and Places, they are not to be blam'd, provided they direct and dispose all Things to the Augmentation of true Piety, and the Salvation of Souls, and not to the Defence of their Riches, their Power, and their Authority.

NOR are we to wonder if those several Things were not settled and determin'd by Christ himself, before he ascended into Heaven. Nor had that been at all seasonable, the Gospel as yet
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not being promulgated, or not being much receiv'd. This was the Care of the Apostles first, and afterwards of the Prelates who succeeded them, agreeable to the Regulations and Practice of the Apostles. Among the *Jews*, whom we mentioned before, the Ecclesiastical Discipline was not establish'd by their Law, given by *Moses*, but by the *Sanhedrim*, many Ages after *Moses* liv'd. And 'tis truly observed by very learned Men, that in the Christian Religion the *Ecclesiastical System* is mostly an Imitation of the approv'd Institutions of the *Jewish* Sanhedrim, or Synagogue, as afterwards the * *Distributions* of Churches and Dioceses were, for the most part, made according to the Divisions of the *Roman* Empire. Besides, though these Things that relate to the Hierarchy were not appointed by Christ in express Terms, yet are they founded upon his Doctrine; for since he founded and establish'd a *Church*, he by consequence appointed all Things that are necessary to its Preservation. This the Nature of the Thing requires; this the common Right of Society; and this the very Design and End of the appointed Government.

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* " Conc. Trull. can. 38. τοῖς πολιτικοῖς εἰ, &c."

Then the Apostles, who discharged the Administration entrusted to the Executors of the Will and delegated Power of Christ, exercised Government and Discipline in the Churches which they had planted, and gave the Power of exercising the same to their Successors; not indeed with regard to their Censures, the Power of making use of them with the same Force and Effect, but more or less, in proportion to the Gifts which they had of discerning the Spirits. Lastly, I see nothing in the Constitution or OEconomy of the Christian Church, repugnant to Reason, or otherwise determin'd, than any prudent Man would determine it. But in the Administration of these Things, we ought always to distinguish between those which are of Right divine, and those which are of ecclesiastical, and consequently of human Right; and which, therefore, according to the different Circumstances of Places, and Times, and Affairs, are wont ever and anon to be chang'd. They are not rightly chang'd, as we observ'd before, for no other End than to augment the Pomp and the Gain of the Priesthood, but they are very justly alter'd to obviate the Vices and Immoralities of the Age, and to repel (which often happens) encroaching Superstition, that

that so they may repress increasing Malice, and be as so many Out-works to the Christian Religion: For Ecclesiastical Affairs are to be dispos'd and order'd with that Design, and Purpose, and View, that lopping off superfluous and luxuriantly troublesome Branches, and engrafting, if requir'd, more fitting ones in their stead, (whether it be in Rites and Ceremonies, or in Discipline,) the external State of Religion may be always adapted to promote internal Sanctity.

AFTER these Observations have been made, it would hardly be reasonable to expect, that all the present External of Religion should be according to the Pattern of the Primitive, since the Government of the Church must necessarily change, as the State of human Affairs is alter'd; which we find has happened to several Rites, and several Institutions, which have been dismiss'd, having been, as it were, superannuated. In the Administration of the Sacraments, many Customs and many Ceremonies that were formerly receiv'd, are now grown obsolete: As for Example, the Dipping, or three times Dipping in Baptism: The Unctions, Exufflations, and Exorcisms of the Clergy, the Tasting of Milk and Honey, and several Things of the like

Nature. There is no less Variation in the Forms and Words that are us'd by him who baptizes ; as likewise in the Eucharist several Things are now omitted, which were formerly us'd. The Host of the Eucharist was formerly given to little Children and Infants: It was carried to be eat at Home, or to be given to Friends who were in Danger, to Friends who were dying, and sometimes too, I fear, to those who were actually dead. Some us'd Bread unleaven'd, and others Bread fermented : Some drank unquench'd Wines, and others Wine diluted ; nor are we shock'd at either of them. The Antients kept likewise their Love-Feasts, Christian Banquets, annex'd to the Eucharist ; and that in the Times of the Apostles, and their immediate Successors. Then, as soon as the Prayers were ended, or the Lord's Supper had been administer'd, which they daily celebrated, they saluted one another with a holy Kiss, or a Kiss of Charity. Abstinence from Blood, or from Things strangled, along Time obtain'd in the Church, and that as they believ'd, by Virtue of an Apostolick Institution. Concerning Fasts, the Times, the Rules, and the Manner of observing them, the antient Customs differ'd much from those which are used
at

at present; nor had they any Stability. The Order of Deaconesses has been abolish'd. With regard to publick Penance, or penitential Discipline, many Things have been relax'd, many commuted, and many have been difus'd. In short, the Order, the Forms, and the Ways that are observ'd in the Solemnity of the sacred Worship, vary very much from each other: As likewise the Liturgies, the Duties, and the Gestures of those who pray. We pray kneeling upon the Lord's Day; formerly they pray'd standing: And several Things of the like Consideration * ought to be so manag'd, as that they may have the aptest Tendency to Use and Edification.

THESE Things have we said in general concerning the State of the Christian Church: And what we have said will be still more clear, if, by way of Conclusion, we add a few Things concerning its Constitution, and its divine or human Authority. The Church is wont
to

* Crescat igitur oportet, & multum vehementerque proficiat, tam singulorum quam omnium, tam unius hominis quam totius Ecclesie, atatum & seculorum gradibus intelligentia, scientia, & sapientia; sed in suo duntaxat genere, in eodem scilicet dogmate, eodem sensu, eademque sententia. Vincent. Liran. Common. m. p. 309. cum Salv. Ipsa plenaria Concilia saepe priora à posterioribus emendantur, quum aliquo experimento rerum aperitur, quod clausum erat, & cognoscitur quo latebat, August. l. 2. de bapt. cap. 3.

to be defin'd the Congregation of the Faithful, or of Persons professing the Christian Faith, and may be justly and more especially defin'd a *Voluntary Society*, instituted by Christ, under Christ its Head, and distinguish'd from others both in its Doctrine, and in its Rites. I call it a *Voluntary Society*, not as to its Original, and its first Constitution, for that did not depend upon the Will of Men; but 'tis so far voluntary, as that no one can be forced into this Society, nor detain'd in it against his Will. Christ requires a free Obedience; and 'tis peculiar to the Religion instituted by him, that it should make its Way by the Force of Truth alone, without any external Compulsion, or Penalty equivalent to Compulsion, either from Christians towards Infidels, or from Christians towards one another. It abstains from corporal Punishments, and seizes upon no Man's Estate, or his Goods. These belong to another Order, to another Jurisdiction, and regard the Magistrate in his political Capacity. The Christian Law was not constituted after the same Manner that the Judaical was formerly; in which latter, there was no Distinction between Civil and Sacred Law. All their Law was divine, as the Law of a People who had God alone
for

for their King: I said that this Liberty was peculiar to the Christian Religion alone, and was its great Prerogative. Let other Sects, like that of *Mahomet*, have Recourse to Force of Arms: Let their Religion increase and spread, while 'tis maintain'd by the Blood of Strangers; but ours grows, and is propagated by the fructifying Streams of our own: Let them brutally conquer like Enemies, while we overcome as Friends, as Advisers, as Counsellors: Let them by Threats, and the Fear of Death, compel servile Souls to mingle with their own Flock; we, by shewing them the Way of Salvation, and of eternal Life, perswade them to enter into that Way, exhort them, and, as it were, compel them, but compel them only by the Force of Truth, and the Stings of their own Consciences.

'Tis with this *Meaning* that we call the Religion of Christ the *Religion of Liberty*, and his Worshippers voluntary Adorers. It uses no Force, as we hinted above, but the Persuasive and the Rational, and invades no Foreign Province: It touches no Man's Goods, or his Life, for they belong to *Cæsar*; nor pretends to force any Man's Conscience, for that is God's alone: But yet the Church has its own Rights, and Rights of

a triple Order, divine, and social, and political. First, the Church has its Rights divine appointed and confirm'd by Christ and his Apostles; as the Right of preaching the Word of God, and of administering the Sacraments; and of electing and appointing Persons that are proper for the due Performance of these; and, lastly, that of banishing from their sacred Worship wicked and flagitious Persons. But secondly, the Church has its social Rights, such as its Rulers can agree on among themselves for the Good of the Whole, the Magistrate not opposing them, and they being innocent and agreeable to Christian Liberty. Lastly, the Church has its political Rights, such as have been granted to it by the Magistrate and the Laws; many of which relate to the Revenues and Privileges of Ecclesiasticks, to the Modes of Disciplines, to the Right of Convention, or of making new Constitutions, with others of the like Nature, that differ one from another according to the Difference of Places and Times. And within these Bounds the Rights of the Church seem to me to be comprehended.

AMONG the political Rights of the Church we have number'd the Right of calling and holding of Councils, and Ecclesiastical Conventions; for Ecclesiastical
Assemblies

Assemblies seem to me to be instituted by human Prudence, and not by Right divine ; yet not so far, but that in extrem Neceſſity we may conſult for the Good of the Chriſtian Religion, that it may keep its Ground. In theſe Conventions they wholly deliberate about rightly ordering the Externals of Religion, and the OEconomy of the Church. But if any one appeals to a Council for a final Determination of ſome ſignal Controverſy, he ought to acquieſce in their Judgment of it, (unleſs the Prince happens to interpoſe,) ſo that no publick Controverſy concerning that Matter be carried on any further. In the mean while, for whatever Side the Council declares, the Truth remains unalter'd. But for the Preſervation of Peace and Order, the Matter ought to be look'd upon as concluded, by the Appellant, or ought at leaſt to be buried in Silence. But that we may make an equitable Judgment of theſe Tribunals, 'tis requiſite to carry our Enquiry ſomething higher.

LET us then lay down as a Fundamental, that the Chriſtian Church can never entirely periſh, can never be extinct upon Earth; neither the Pagan nor the Jewiſh Religion will ever revive, and be the ruling Religion; neither the
Mahometan

Mat. xvi.
18. and
xxviii. ult.

Mahometan or any other Law will ever prevail throughout the Globe, to the Extinction of the Gospel, and of the Christian Religion. But he who promised that he would preserve his Church from perishing, did not likewise promise that he would preserve it free from Corruption; I mean Corruption both in Doctrine and Manners: So far from that, the same sacred Oracles forewarn us of future Offences, of future Apostacy, and of a future Antichrist; and that during his Reign, the Church should be corrupt both in Doctrine and Morals. As for what relates to Morals, I wish there were any Church from which I could wipe off that Stain: But, Oh! the Grief, and the Shame! The Things which in every Religion are most sacred, and above all Religions in ours, Integrity of Mind, and unblemish'd Morals, those very Things are chiefly wanting among Christians: Nay, those very Persons who boast themselves free from all Kinds of Errors in Doctrine, those very Persons are most of all infamous for their Vices and their Immorality.

MORAL Evils, according to the Institution of the Gospel, are above all Evils odious to God: They offend and grieve the Spirit of God, and drive it away, or extinguish it, (*Ephes. iv. 30.*)
and

and quite shut up the Entrance to Truth, and to the understanding the Will of Christ, *Job.* xiv. 17. and vii. 17. So that 'tis not credible that the Spirit of Truth should dwell among Evil-doers.

NOR can I be of Opinion, that even the Doctrine of any particular Church whatever, is entirely purg'd and purified from all Petulancy; but 'tis less erroneous in some Churches than others, and the Errors are fewer, and less important. If we would enquire concerning this Matter of the universal Church, the Opinion of that can be no otherwise discover'd, than by a general Council: And since a general Council (that we may now return to it) is compos'd very near of the same Persons with provincial and national Synods, the same Person or Persons, obnoxious to the same Passions, hardly grow wiser, or less erroneous by the Change of Place. The Determinations of Councils, whether of the greater, or of the less, seem to me to be little different from the Decrees of Senates or Courts, or from the Opinions of learned Men, concerning certain Matters propos'd for them to consult upon; to which a due Regard indeed ought to be paid: But as for any Obligation that lies upon us to receive any Opinions concerning sacred Matters, and embrace them as
Articles

Articles of Faith, every Man's Conscience is to be his Judge in the last Appeal, God being the Witness to his Sincerity. Doctors, or Congregations of Doctors, may err as grossly as others, and build upon a Foundation of Hay or Straw, empty and combustible Matter. This I constantly and firmly believe, that since the Times of the Apostles there has been no infallible Tribunal here below: Nothing of equal Authority, of equal Certainty with the sacred Writings, neither Determination of Council, nor oral Tradition; and that Mens Consciences cannot so far be bound by the Opinions of any Persons whatever, but that there remains in private Persons the Judgment of Discretion, which is to be directed by the Rule of Holy Scripture. No Ecclesiastical Conventions whatever can create or constitute Truth, nor invent or devise new Articles; but their Business is to endeavour to discover Truth according to the utmost of their Power, and to explain the Doctrine of primitive Christianity rightly. But since we are not oblig'd to place an implicate Belief in them, which is to believe in them instead of God, their Opinions,

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“ Δεῖ γὰρ περὶ τῶν θεῶν μυηρίων μὴδε τὸ τυχεῖν. ὅτι.
 “ Quod nihil addendum sit Sacris Literis in re fidei. Cyril.
 “ Catec. 4. m. p. 30. huc transfer si bene congruunt.”

Constitutions, and their Decrees, ought to be subjected to a just Examination; and if they chance to be found repugnant to the sacred Writings, nothing which is not agreeable to those can oblige any one's Conscience.

BESIDES, if we look into the Nature and Passions of those Assemblies, we shall find that the Persons of whom they are compos'd, are for the most part Servers of Times, and Respecters of Persons. Debates are carried on there by a Spirit of Party, and almost always determin'd according to the Pleasure of those by whose Authority those Councils were conven'd. The Councils that have hitherto met, have been called by Popes or Emperors; and how prevalent Faction has been in both of them, I had rather you should learn from their own History, or the Animadversions of others, than ours. The Apostles formerly, being Persons who were not obnoxious to Error, spoke well when they said, *So it seems good to the Holy Ghost,* ^{Act. xv.} *and to us:* But when the Holy Ghost ^{28.} depends upon the Inspiration of a Prince, or a Pope, Men by a counterfeit Authority are ludicrous in a serious Affair, and the Name of God is profan'd by inscribing it on human Decrees. To be short, give me a Council that is entirely
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free from Party Zeal and Prejudice, as well as from outward Force: Give me, I say, an Ecclesiastical Senate, lawfully call'd together, and upon just and equal Terms; a Senate compos'd of honest, wise, and truly Christian Members, of Persons who court no Man's Favour, who fear no Man's Resentment, and who are none of the greedy Hunters after Preferment, who seek after Gospel Truth alone, and when they have found it, boldly proclaim it, and profess it. Who would not readily venerate the Decisions of such an august Assembly? But such an Assembly here upon Earth, the Sun never yet beheld; and I very much question, whether ever he will behold it. Then till we arrive at those happy Times, and those just and upright Judges, call your own Council, the Chorus of Prophets, of Evangelists, and Apostles: Turn over their Decrees, and consult their Constitutions, and follow those Guides as closely as possibly you can. Light will not be wanting to shew the Way to eternal Happiness, provided your Eyes are but open, and watchful to receive it; and neither Darkness nor Mists obscure your Eyes from worldly Lusts and Desires. Set but these Rules for yourself to walk by, and nothing then is necessary to Salvation but *Sincerity*

Ephes. ii.

20, 21, 22.

cerity only, and that Love of God, and that Love of Truth which is comprehended in it. * As for other Things, more or fewer of them are requisite to Salvation, according to the Measure of every Man's Knowledge and Understanding: He who has but one Talent, shall be accountable but for one; he who has many, shall account for many; but he who is faithful in a little, shall be accepted and rewarded. The poor Widow, who threw only two Mites into the Treasury, gave more, in the Judgment of Christ himself, than they who gave larger Sums. Every Man's Work shall be valued by his Ability, and the Goodness of his Will, and not by its Weight, its Pomp, or its Magnitude. Thus he who believes in God when he speaks and reveals himself, and embraces with a stedfast Faith whatever he knows to be his Word, that Person comprehensively, and implicitly, and by the Bent of his Will, believes in all Things that are reveal'd from Heaven; and the same especially and explicitly believes any particular Article as soon as it is manifest upon Enquiry, that 'tis the Word of God. God regards not so much the

Number

* *Proculdubio aut docilis ignorantia non facit Hæreticum, aut omnis Christi discipulus erit Hæreticus. Facund. Hermian. l. 12. c. 1.*

Number of Articles which a Man believes, as that Disposition of Soul which accompanies his Faith, and the Fruit which it bears. Faith barren of Works, and without Foundation, is of no Validity; and there is no certain Foundation of Faith, except the Word of God; nor can that Faith be said to be fruitful, without paying to God that Obedience which is due to him: Therefore let us adhere to these; on these let us lean and depend.

AND NOW to conclude all in a few Words: I cannot deny, but that in some Ecclesiastical Affairs, the Management of which is in a great Measure entrusted to Christian Prudence, there are some knotty Points, some almost inextricable Cases, in which 'tis not so much in our Power to avoid every Error, as to beware of great ones. But the same Inconvenience often happens in other human Affairs; in which there are several Evils that are incurable, and Doubts that are insolvable. Now, of several Evils, and several Doubts, Prudence will chuse the least: But the prudent Man will always chuse for his Council, and for the Rule of his Judgment, the Holy Scriptures, a clear Conscience, and the Nature, and Design, and End of the Christian Religion.

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